

# Planned Parenthood to close 10 clinics in Iowa and the mountain West

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Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) announced May 18 plans to shutter 10 clinics across Iowa, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico, due to both budgetary shortfalls during the Obama administration and the ramped-up attacks financially and politically by the anti-abortion religious-right forces within the Trump administration.

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland in Sioux City, in the state's northwest, and clinics located at Burlington and Keokuk in the state's southeastern rural corner will close by the end of June. A fourth health center in Bettendorf of the eastern Quad Cities, which provides abortions, will remain open until the building that houses the services is sold. Eight Planned Parenthood clinics will remain open for now in the state. The number of facilities providing clean and safe abortions will be reduced from eight to five.

Republican Governor Terry Branstad recently signed legislation that declined \$3 million in federal Medicaid to pay for care for almost 15,000 Iowans at the four clinics slated for closure. Many of the affected women live in rural areas where there is no other comparable and affordable care. More than 80 percent of the patients seen in three of the centers receive birth control that depends upon public funding. In 2016, Medicaid subscribers made 10,000 visits to Planned Parenthood offices in Iowa.

The anti-abortion zealots hailed the Planned Parenthood cutbacks. Maggie DeWitte, director of Iowans for Life, perversely told the *Des Moines Register*, "I would say this is fantastic news for women and families in the state of Iowa."

Branstad, nominated by Trump for an ambassadorship to China, announced plans for the creation of a state-run family-planning system in Iowa to the tune of about \$3 million using only state monies,

doubtless to be staffed with anti-abortion and anti-birth-control religious zealots. The joint federal-state funding of Planned Parenthood and family planning services operated on a 9 to 1 funding arrangement, whereby Medicaid and Title X provided 90 percent of the monies needed to run the health centers with a 10 percent state match.

Susana de Baca, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, told the *Des Moines Register*, "Defunding Planned Parenthood will set a healthcare crisis into motion in Iowa. This is the case of extreme Iowa politicians deciding they know what's better for a woman's health than the women actually seeking care, with devastating consequences." She told the *Register* that the effect will be hardest on women who have depended upon the facilities for their primary care, including the poor and the young working poor.

Three of the four clinics closing next month are located in counties ranked in the top 10 counties that have the highest rates of chlamydia, a common and treatable sexually transmissible disease (STD). Thirty staff members in the four centers will lose their jobs.

As of December of last year, there were 12,219 people using the existing state's family-planning network, according to the Iowa Legislative Services Agency. Federal support to states for family planning comes primarily from Title X monies, which the governor and the Iowa legislature cut off. In Kansas, the state government declined to dispense Title X funding for family planning altogether.

The Iowa legislature has also banned most abortions after 20 weeks, and instituted a 72-hour wait for termination of pregnancy at any stage, for which Planned Parenthood and the ACLU sued state officials in Polk County district court.

In 2011, Texas took similar actions of declining

Medicaid funds in order to shut down Planned Parenthood and create a state-run family-planning system. A report cited by ABC News confirmed that 30,000 fewer women were served in the state program, and that more than 80 family planning offices had closed, a third of which were Planned Parenthood centers.

Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains (PPRM) reported it will close six clinics in Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico. PPRM noted that its facilities' financial troubles dated back to Obamacare, when declining Medicaid reimbursements drastically reduced its abilities to cover the expenses of providing women's care, and that the current political climate added to the social and financial stress.

The PPRM closure in Casper on July 21 after 40 years of operation will make Wyoming the second state, after North Dakota, where there will be no Planned Parenthood offices. The health center in Casper serves over 500 patients, who will have to travel many more miles for comparable care or do entirely without medical attention due to costs.

Clinics in Longmont and Parker, Colorado, will be shut down, as well as New Mexico centers in Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, and Farmington. Vicki Coward, president of PPRM, told the *Washington Post* that if Title X monies are eliminated, a program providing vasectomies for men in New Mexico will be closed.

Coward said, "We're looking at this from a massive planning perspective, but then you put yourself in the shoes of the person who needs a vasectomy, and it's a profound event for them. The cost of human misery in this setting is huge, and I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that these are people, not some stupid political game."

Frightened women seeking free birth control IUDs and fearful of the closure of the clinics, flocked to Planned Parenthood centers by an increase of 10-fold after Trump's election.

PPFA provides access to birth control, emergency contraception, breast and cervical cancer screening, cancer treatments, and STD screening and treatment at more than 600 health centers in the United States, as well as access to safe and clean abortions at a lesser number of facilities. Over 2.5 million women depend upon the clinics for their primary care annually, and

about 60 percent of PPFA patients utilize the federal publicly funded health programs.



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