

ABORTION LAWS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ABORTION RATES

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A 2008 study done by Michael J. New, Ph.D. was the first of its kind to compare different types of parental involvement laws and their affect on reducing the incidence of abortion among minors. This comprehensive analysis of data regarding abortions performed on minors (age 15, 16 and 17-years-old) from nearly all 50 states between 1985 and 1999 demonstrates that state-level parental involvement laws are effective in reducing the incidence of abortion among minors by approximately 14 percent.

While a number of different types of laws result in reductions in minor abortion rates, including informed consent laws, overall, the findings indicate that when a state enacts a parental involvement law, the abortion rate falls by an average of approximately 13.6 percent. The more protective a parental involvement law, the larger the decline in abortion.

Laws that require parental consent instead of parental notification reduce the minor abortion rate by about 19 percent. Furthermore, laws that mandate the involvement of two parents, instead of just one parent, reduce the in-state minor abortion rate by approximately 31 percent. When the age groups are analyzed, the results indicate that the passage of parental involvement laws reduces the abortion rate among 17-year-olds by 18.3 percent, among 16-year-olds by 14.3 percent, and among 15-year-olds, by 8.6 percent. These findings are all considered to be statistically significant. Parental involvement laws do not result in declines in the abortion rate for 18 and 19-year-olds, which is not surprising. These women would be demographically similar to their minor counterparts, but since they are no longer minors, they would not be directly affected by the passage of the parental involvement legislation. This finding provides additional evidence that the abortion decline among minors is caused by the enactment of parental involvement legislation, as opposed to broader cultural factors.



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PARENTAL CONSENT VS. PARENTAL NOTIFICATION LAWS

Parental consent laws result in an 18.7 percent decline in minor abortion rates, whereas parental notification laws only result in a decline of around 5 percent. Parental consent laws result in larger abortion declines across all age groups. In each case, these differences achieve conventional standards of statistical significance, providing solid evidence that consent laws are more effective than notification laws.

ONE-PARENT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT LAWS VS. TWO-PARENT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT LAWS

Parental involvement laws, which require the involvement of two parents, result in larger abortion reductions than laws that require the involvement of only one parent. Overall, laws requiring the involvement of two parents result in a 31.4 percent decline in the minor abortion rate, whereas parental involvement laws requiring the involvement of only one parent result in a minor abortion rate decline of 13.5 percent. This difference is statistically significant. Furthermore, among every age group, legislation requiring the involvement of two parents results in larger abortion declines than laws requiring the involvement of only one parent. Overall, laws that require the involvement of two parents show the most promise for being able to reduce the incidence of abortion among minors.

The overall minor abortion rate in the United States has fallen by close to fifty percent between 1985 and 1999, and New's study shows that parental involvement laws are an important causal factor in this decline. His study provides solid evidence that laws that require parental consent result in larger abortion declines than laws that only require parental notification, and legislation requiring the involvement of two parents results in a larger abortion declines than laws requiring the involvement of only one parent. These findings should inform future debates in state legislators about how to best protect unborn children. Currently, about 36 states have a parental involvement law on the books, but some are more effective than others in their ability to reduce the incidence of abortion. The laws that were enacted in Minnesota (requiring two-parent notification) and Mississippi (requiring two-parent consent) were shown to be among the most effective in reducing abortion rates among minors.