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Planned Parenthood, the only abortion provider left in Nashville, suspends abortion services

Anita Wadhvani, Nashville Tennessean Published 2:28 p.m. CT Dec. 10, 2018 | Updated 11:38 a.m. CT Dec. 12, 2018

U.S. Supreme Court won't hear challenge to Tennessee's abortion measure, Amendment 1 Michael Schwab/USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE



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The only remaining abortion clinic in Nashville has ceased offering abortions, instead referring patients to clinics hundreds of miles away in Knoxville and Memphis.

Officials with Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi, which operates the north Nashville clinic, could not say when the clinic would resume providing abortions. The organization has a shortage of abortion providers, a spokeswoman said.

It is also "undergoing a period of quality improvement and will return with these services soon," a statement said.

Fast facts: [What to know about abortion services in Nashville](#)

Six remain: [Clinics in Tennessee that still provide abortions](#)

More: [Knoxville clinics brace for displaced patients](#)

Second clinic to stop offering abortions this year

It is the second clinic in Nashville to stop providing abortions this year. The Women's Center [closed in August](#) after the sale of its building and its operators said then they hoped to reopen. The center has not yet reopened.

The suspension of abortion services at Nashville's only abortion clinic comes at a time when the number of abortion providers in Tennessee and throughout the Southeast continues to dwindle.

Tennessee now has six abortion providers, down from 16 in 2000, but more than in any other neighboring state except North Carolina.

More than 9,700 abortions were performed in Tennessee in 2016, according to the Department of Health's most recent data.



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Planned Parenthood supporters demonstrate at Municipal Auditorium in Nashville before a Donald Trump rally in 2017. The organization has stopped offering abortion services at its Nashville clinic, the last abortion provider in the city. (Photo: Shelley Mays / The Tennessean)

Largest provider in the state

The Planned Parenthood clinic in north Nashville was the largest provider of abortions in the state, serving women who live in rural Middle Tennessee counties as well as neighboring states such as Kentucky, Mississippi and Alabama.

Some women will now have to travel even farther to obtain an abortion. And, under Tennessee's 48-hour waiting period law, they will have to make the trip twice.

The law, [enacted in 2015](#), requires two trips to an abortion clinic with a two-day wait between the first appointment to obtain counseling and then a subsequent office visit to undergo the procedure.

Tennessee Right to Life, which advocates against abortions, is already seeing a spike in women callers who could not obtain abortion appointments in Nashville, said Brian Harris, the organization's president.

The organization advertises services for women who are pregnant and need help, but does not perform abortions or refer women to abortion clinics. Instead the organization provides free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds. It also offers to connect women to services intended to assist them in continuing their pregnancies to term.

"The phone has been very busy here with women calling and looking for abortion referrals — busier than they've ever been," Harris said.

Open for non-abortion services

On Monday, the Nashville Planned Parenthood clinic was open for non-abortion services, but its waiting room was empty.

Operators at the organization's scheduling line are referring callers to other locations.

"As of right now we're only scheduling for other locations," an operator who answered the phone at the clinic's scheduling line said. The woman, who did not give her name, said abortion services were suspended "indefinitely."

The Women's Center, along with other abortion providers in Tennessee, are still [fighting to overturn the 48-hour waiting period](#) rule in federal court.

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