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Illinois clinic fined for promoting abortions without license

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CHICAGO – Illinois regulators have ordered a suburban Chicago clinic to remove references to surgical abortions from its website and pay a \$36,000 fine.

The Illinois Department of Public Health sent a strongly worded order to the Women's Aid Clinic in Lincolnwood by certified mail on March 7. But the clinic's website on Thursday still was promoting "first trimester abortion services from 6 to 14 weeks of pregnancy with two types of anesthesia."

In October, the clinic lost its abortion clinic license after it was cited for dusty equipment, lack of a supervising registered nurse and failure to perform CPR on a patient who later died.

Since then, the clinic has remained open, even as its owner told the state the clinic would cease to operate as a licensed pregnancy termination center. It's unclear whether the clinic still is providing surgical abortions, which could be a violation of state law. A woman answering the phone said the clinic provides only the abortion pill.

The clinic failed to pay a \$36,000 fine assessed in October, according to the March 7 letter, which also demands that the clinic return its original license to the state or face a revocation action. The matter will be referred to the Illinois attorney general's office if the clinic doesn't pay the fine and cease its "false advertising," the letter states.

Phone messages left Thursday for clinic owner Larisa Rozansky weren't immediately returned. In January, she told The Associated Press that the patient who died didn't need CPR because she was speaking to emergency workers when she was taken to a hospital after her abortion. The other violations uncovered by the state inspectors were technicalities, Rozansky said.

Before last year, the clinic had gone 15 years without a full state health inspection. It was one of nine licensed abortion clinics Illinois inspectors visited last year as it caught up with a backlog of inspections.

The clinic's apparent scorn for state regulators demonstrates the need for tougher monitoring of Illinois abortion providers, said Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League.

"Here we have an oversight system that has been dragging its feet and when they finally do investigate it looks like this clinic is outright disobeying the state," Scheidler said.

Last year, Illinois began quietly increasing its inspections of abortion clinics. The Illinois sweep was prompted by a 2010 raid on a Philadelphia abortion provider that regulators had ignored for years. Pennsylvania authorities described a filthy "house of horrors" where late-term abortions were routinely performed by untrained staff.

Some Illinois abortion clinics had gone up to 15 years without inspections before last year's crackdown. State officials attribute the backlog of inspections to a lack of funds and resources.

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