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TOP STORY

## Planned Parenthood buys Charleston Women's Medical Center, will offer abortions at new location

By Mary Katherine Wildeman [mkwildeman@postandcourier.com](mailto:mkwildeman@postandcourier.com) Dec 1, 2017



Planned Parenthood is closing its Rutledge Avenue location in Charleston and opening a new facility on Ashley River Road, in what was formerly the Charleston Women's Medical Center. File

File

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Planned Parenthood has bought the Charleston Women's Medical Center in West Ashley, a lightning rod for controversy and protest in years past for being the only place in the area where a woman could seek an elective abortion.

Planned Parenthood, which owns two clinics in South Carolina, does not offer abortions at its current Charleston location. When the newly owned facility opens sometime in December, said Sarah Eldred, a spokeswoman for the organization, Planned Parenthood will begin offering elective abortions for the first time in the Charleston area.

The Charleston Women's Medical Center gave notice it closed its doors Nov. 13 in Thursday's Post and Courier. Patients who need access to their medical records should email [cwcmedicalrecords@gmail.com](mailto:cwcmedicalrecords@gmail.com). The facility, at 1312 Ashley River Road, is closed until Planned Parenthood re-opens the facility's doors.

For the time being, there is no center offering elective abortions in the Lowcountry. Anyone who is seeking an elective abortion in the area can call Planned Parenthood at 843-628-4380, Eldred said.

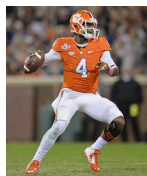
Planned Parenthood's current Charleston clinic, at 200 Rutledge Ave, will close.

The new facility is larger and more accessible, Jenny Black, CEO of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, said in a statement.

The group will offer expanded education and community engagement programs, and will continue to provide cancer screenings, Pap tests, STD testing and treatment, along with other women's health services.

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"Planned Parenthood South Atlantic is committed to providing essential care that South Carolinians rely on, no matter what," Black said.



Mary Groce of Goose Creek bows her head in prayer Friday as participants in the 40 Days for Life hold a vigil in front of the Charleston Women's Medical Center in West Ashley on Friday, Oct. 22, 2010. The group, part of a national organization, prays for an end to abortion. They protest at the Charleston Women's Medical Center regularly. File

A number listed for the Charleston Women's Medical Center is routed straight to Planned Parenthood's line. The center's website now directs to Planned Parenthood's website.

Planned Parenthood has made the news this year for Republican efforts to strip its funding. In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster issued an executive order in late August aiming to cut all public funding to health care providers affiliated with abortion clinics in the state. Under the order, abortion clinics would have been excluded from Medicaid's provider network.

President Donald Trump moved to allow states to block abortion clinics from receiving any federal dollars. Federal money can not be used toward abortions, by law. A federal judge stopped an effort to defund Planned Parenthood in Texas in February.

It is as-yet unclear whether McMaster's order would withstand a legal challenge. Attempts to reach his office Thursday afternoon were unsuccessful.

A national poll released in March by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed a majority of Americans support federal funding for Planned Parenthood. Twenty-two percent favored cutting off funding.

Planned Parenthood supporters showed up to advocate for its continued funding at public forums hosted by Sen. Lindsey Graham and Rep. Mark Sanford, among others. The organization has operated in South Carolina for almost 60 years.

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