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Planned Parenthood opening new Sheboygan clinic that will provide medication abortions, cancer screenings

Mary Spicuzza, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Published 1:00 p.m. CT May 11, 2018 | Updated 12:01 p.m. CT May 12, 2018



(Photo: Gary C. Klein/USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin is opening a new clinic in Sheboygan that will provide certain abortions, cancer screenings and other services.

The new center, set to open Monday, will be the only clinic in Wisconsin outside of Milwaukee and Madison to offer abortion services. The Sheboygan facility will provide medication abortions to women who are in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy.

"We have women coming from the U.P. (Upper Peninsula) of Michigan all the way to Madison and Milwaukee to receive abortion services and we saw a need in northeast Wisconsin," said Tanya Atkinson, the group's president and CEO.

The opening of the new clinic comes as the Republican-controlled state Legislature and Gov. Scott Walker are restricting abortion. In April, they [banned health insurance for the state's public employees](#) ([/story/news/politics/2018/04/03/gov-scott-walker-removes-most-abortion-coverage-wisconsin-public-workers/482824002/](#)) from covering most abortion services.

RELATED: [Gov. Scott Walker removes most abortion coverage for Wisconsin public workers](#) ([/story/news/politics/2018/04/03/gov-scott-walker-removes-most-abortion-coverage-wisconsin-public-workers/482824002/](#))

The opening also comes nearly two years after Planned Parenthood [closed its clinic near Appleton](#) ([/story/news/local/wisconsin/2016/08/22/fox-valley-abortion-clinic-closing/89099748/](#)) in Grand Chute because of security concerns. That center had previously suspended providing abortions in October 2015 because of a temporary staff shortage.

Planned Parenthood first opened in Sheboygan in 1973. It closed its health center there in August after being notified its lease was not being renewed and relocated to a temporary location.

"We're so excited that we're re-establishing our services in Sheboygan," Atkinson said.

The group began construction on its new location in February.

The fully renovated center, which was funded by donors, is significantly larger than its previous location — 3,585 square feet compared to 2,100.

"It was the one time that Planned Parenthood didn't lie. They said they were going to be back, and here they are," said Dan Miller, the state director of Pro-Life Wisconsin.

Miller added that the new center is proof Planned Parenthood doesn't need public funding.

"We look forward to helping them get off of the public dole," he said. "Anywhere where they're getting public funding, we're going after it."

Julaine Appling, president of Wisconsin Family Action, echoed those comments.

"It is another sign to me that they don't need another dime of public funds," Appling said. "Every funding stream that affords them public taxpayer money needs to be shut off, and it needs to be shut off now."

The clinic will offer three new services: medication abortions, endometrial biopsies and treatment for early pregnancy complications and miscarriages.

Endometrial biopsy is a test that can help evaluate the cause of infertility or uterine infections.

The center's miscarriage services will involve clinicians evaluating bleeding and cramping in early pregnancy with exams, lab tests and ultrasounds to see if the patient is experiencing a miscarriage. If doctors determine the pregnancy is viable, they will help connect patients with prenatal care. If the pregnancy ends as a miscarriage, the doctors will offer different options depending on patient preference.

"At Planned Parenthood, we create the space for a woman to make these important decisions free of judgment and in consultation with her family, her faith and her medical provider," Atkinson said.

The facility will also continue to provide breast and cervical cancer screenings, birth control, well woman checkups, STD testing and treatment, testicular exams, sex education and referrals for prenatal care, adoption and cancer treatment.

Sexually transmitted infections have been increasing around the country, [including in Milwaukee \(/story/news/local/milwaukee/2018/03/06/hiv-syphilis-clusters-affecting-least-125-people-including-high-school-students-discovered-milwaukee/397534002/\)](#) and elsewhere in Wisconsin. Atkinson said Planned Parenthood could help fight that trend.

"With the recent spikes in STD rates within Sheboygan County, we are looking forward to resuming our ability to test and treat STDs for our patients as part of our mission to enhance the overall health and well-being of the community," Atkinson said.

The Sheboygan clinic will open just seven months after Planned Parenthood opened a [massive new center on Water St. \(/story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/10/06/planned-parenthood-opening-new-abortion-clinic-milwaukee/717250001/\)](#) in Milwaukee.

RELATED: [Planned Parenthood opening a new abortion clinic in Milwaukee \(/story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/10/06/planned-parenthood-opening-new-abortion-clinic-milwaukee/717250001/\)](#)

The Milwaukee center, which offers medication and surgical abortion services, was the first clinic Planned Parenthood built in Wisconsin since its facility on the east side of Madison opened in 2004. The Water St. project's \$8 million price tag — which included the cost of purchasing the land, doing remediation at the site and building the facility — was also funded by donors.

Planned Parenthood also offers medication and surgical abortion services at its Madison health center. Together, the Milwaukee and Madison facilities serve about 4,000 patients a year.

That amounts to the vast majority of abortions performed in Wisconsin. In 2016, for example, there were 5,612 abortions in the state, according to an online Department of Health Services report.

Planned Parenthood's other centers around Wisconsin will continue to provide family planning and other services. There are 21 Planned Parenthood centers in the state.

Planned Parenthood served 58,397 patients in 2017 and provided 4,128 abortions that year, the group said.

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