

## WOMEN'S HEALTH

## MENU

## IN THE NEWS

## STATE POLITICS & POLICY | Many New Jersey Abortion Clinics Do Not Receive Required Biennial Inspections, Report Says

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State records show that New Jersey health officials inspected only one of the six-state licensed abortion clinics in two years until recently when complaints brought inspectors to two other clinics, which were closed because of health violations, the *Press Atlantic City* reports. Abortion clinics are classified by the state as ambulatory-care facilities, and the **New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services** requires investigations at ambulatory-care facilities every other year.

The Atlantic City, N.J.-based abortion provider **Alternatives** was closed after violations were discovered in June. Abortion provider **Metropolitan Medical Associates** in Englewood earlier this year also was forced to close as a result of health violations, but it subsequently re-opened. State records found that Alternatives and Metropolitan Medical had not been inspected in six and five years, respectively, the *Press* reports.

According to the *Press*, state records indicate that inspections at three other abortion providers in the state "remain overdue." A **Planned Parenthood of Central New Jersey** clinic in Shrewsbury was last inspected in 2000, according to the *Press Atlantic City*. Tom Slater, spokesperson for the health department, said the lack of inspections is attributed to the drastic increase in New Jersey-licensed health facilities since 2000 and the minimal increase in new health inspectors. The number of ambulatory-care facilities in the state increased from 594 in 2000 to 1,003 currently, he said, adding that only 23 additional inspectors have been hired during the same time. About 17% of the state's ambulatory service centers are inspected biannually, according to Slater.

According to the *Press Atlantic City*, the state health department cannot confirm that only the six clinics perform abortions because the department does not keep records on which facilities perform the procedure. The state **Division of Consumer Affairs** can inspect the more than 20 private abortion clinics in New Jersey, but the department does not have standards for routine inspection, the *Press Atlantic City* reports. Jeff Lamm, spokesperson for the consumer affairs division, said the department would not release inspection reports or comment on inspections.

#### Reaction

Slater also said that even if routine inspections are overdue, any complaints received by the department are promptly investigated. "These facilities are staffed by licensed professionals, and part of their

licensure requirements is that they uphold the highest of standards," he said, adding that the health department has "confidence that they will continue to do that and notify us if there is a problem." Health department officials are starting to cross-train current staff to allow more people to do inspections, according to Slater.

Phyllis Kinsler, PPCNJ president and CEO, said, "I can't say that not following up on routine inspections is the worst thing they could be doing," adding, "Would we all like more resources in health care? Of course. It doesn't mean that they're not doing their job" (Clark, *Press Atlantic City*, 8/19). Marie Tasy, executive director of **New Jersey Right to Life**, has asked state Public Advocate Ronald Chen to use the power of the **Department of the Public Advocate** to ensure that abortion clinics in the state are inspected regularly and that the women who received abortions get follow-up care ( *Daily Women's Health Policy Report*, 7/26). Chen spokesperson Nancy Parello said, "We have requested information from the Department of Health," adding, "We are still in the fact-finding stage" (*Press Atlantic City*, 8/19).

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1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 650,  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-986-2600 202-986-2539 (fax)  
info@nationalpartnership.org

