



STATE NEWS

State orders Durham abortion clinic closed

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RALEIGH, N.C. — State officials have ordered a Durham abortion clinic to close its doors after finding safety violations.

The state Department of Health and Human Services suspended the certificate of operation for The Baker Clinic for Women last Friday. A letter from the department to the clinic pointed to its failure to ensure quality control was performed in blood banking, the process of collecting, separating and storing blood.

According to the department, a survey by the department's Acute and Home Care Licensure and Certification Section showed the clinic failed to perform quality control testing on 108 patients that received Rhesus testing.

Inspectors wrote that the clinic failed to ensure a positive and negative red blood cell control material was tested at least once daily when Rh(D)

testing was performed and failed to follow manufacturer's instructions for performing Rh(D) testing.

The survey was conducted on July 2, and the letter to the clinic was dated July 5. The Baker Clinic has 60 days to appeal the suspension.

"This was on me. So my bad," clinic owner Dr. John Baker said. "We're going to correct it. It's straight forward. It's a technical issue."

Baker sat in the closed office Tuesday, sending letters to his patients about the safety concerns. He said it's the first such letter he's sent in more than a decade of providing abortion services.

"It's like trying to do your own taxes. This is a lot of stuff," he said.

In May, health officials announced they would closely monitor a Charlotte abortion clinic that reopened after briefly losing its license.

A Preferred Woman's Health Center reopened May 15 after DHHS lifted its suspension. Officials revoked the clinic's license in April after determining that staffers were improperly administering a drug to induce abortions. Health officials called the practice dangerous to patients and ineffective.

The Durham and Charlotte clinics are among 16 licensed abortion clinics in North Carolina. Ten full-time DHHS inspectors monitor the facilities and conduct surveys of each one about every two years.

The clinics have recently become the center of debate because of legislation that would tighten regulations on their operations.

Baker said he doesn't see any connection between the legislative debate and the closure of his clinic.\

"There is no relationship whatsoever, as far as I can tell. It's just pure coincidence," he said. "In that legislation, there is not one word in it that has anything to do with laboratory services in an abortion clinic."

Abortion clinics aren't the only health care facilities subject to state standards for lab work, he said, so any other health clinic could have been similarly cited.



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