



# Minnesota NOW

---

## CANDIDATE BRIEFING

Minnesota Women's Building  
550 Rice Street, #102  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55103  
Phone: 651-222-1605  
Fax: 651-292-9417  
E-mail: info@mnnow.org

### MINNESOTA NOW'S POSITION ON "PARENTAL NOTIFICATION" LAWS

The National Organization for Women advocates for repeal of all laws restricting access to safe abortion. Freedom of access to abortion services, freedom from governmental interference in this most private area of our lives, has been one of NOW's core issues since the organization was founded in 1966. This position is one on which most people agree as applied to adults. For minors, however, the position becomes more difficult to accept.

We know that most young people (recent figures show well over 85%) consult their parents when they need help. Even in families in which relationships between parents and their teen-aged children are strained, there is a basic level of trust: children know their parents love them and will help them. For families like these, "parental notification" laws are unnecessary. However, not all families are loving and supportive. Some young people are unable to consult parents when in trouble and trust that they will not be abused or even thrown out of the family home. For that reason, NOW terms so-called "parental notification laws," TEEN ENDANGERMENT LAWS.

Young people need access to good counseling and information about sexuality and pregnancy. Pregnant teens need reassurance that they have not committed a crime. They need knowledgeable adult advice so they can make good decisions for themselves. Teen endangerment laws inhibit providing these services to young people by either forcing them to place themselves in danger or by putting them in the position of criminals defending themselves in court. Our courts are already overburdened, and adding the process of approval for abortions has been costly to all Minnesota taxpayers.

Abortion clinics provide a full range of reproductive services. Their counselors meet with all patients, adults and minors, and explain fetal development and the abortion procedure. They will not perform an abortion unless they feel the patient is sure that's what she wants. The health care workers who provide abortion services are constantly vigilant about following ethical medical practices.

Minnesota NOW also feels that current "parental notification" laws are discriminatory in that only the young women's families must be notified. In addition, most teenagers do not have the financial resources to pay for abortions without adult assistance.

In 1992, Senator John Marty introduced the “trusted adult” bill which would have changed Minnesota’s current two-parent notification law to allow minors seeking abortions to consult with a trusted adult other than a parent. Minnesota NOW lobbied for this bill because it would have been a great improvement over the current law and because we thought it could pass. However, enacting “trusted adult” legislation is not enough; we need to repeal our teen endangerment law and work harder to provide respectful, confidential assistance to pregnant teens and better sexuality education that will prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Abortion is like no other medical procedure because of our society’s problems with discussing sexuality. Of course, we all hope teenagers will consult with their parents or another trusted adult before making an important decision. We know the majority of teenagers do talk with their parents and that for them “parental notification” laws are unnecessary. For those who cannot consult with their families, they are truly teen endangerment laws.

For more information on NOW’s positions on legislative issues, call or write Minnesota NOW.