

Clinic is not among closures

Local Planned Parenthood untouched by changes

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In the next five months, six Planned Parenthood clinics in Indiana will close or merge, bringing the number of clinics in the state from 23 to 17. And although the Lafayette clinic remains untouched, the restructuring raises questions about the impetus for the closures and the future of the clinics.

Ali Slocum, communications director for Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky, said the decision to close the branches wasn't a political one and it should not cast a shadow over the future operations of other clinics.

"This was not a political move. We are operating as a responsible nonprofit," Slocum said. The reorganization is a result of a decreased demand for Planned Parenthood services.

A number of factors contributed to a slowdown in traffic for some clinics in Indiana, and the consolidation of services is an effort to eliminate redundancies and conserve resources. Since the American College of OBGYN recommended Pap tests on a three-year basis instead of annually, the number of patients coming in for Pap tests dropped precipitously. Additionally, as access to emergency contraceptives and long-term contraceptives — like IUDs — increased, patients have less need of annual appointments prescribing birth control.

None of the closing clinics provide abortion services, but Slocum said that was not a major factor in the decision.

In places like Muncie and Terre Haute, the council funds family planning clinics that can absorb some of the patients Planned Parenthood serves in the community, said Kristin Adams, president and CEO of Indiana Family Health Council. The council administers Title X funding. Adams said that can mean there are few patient barriers and those who are 100 percent below the poverty line can receive services without charge.

Tippecanoe County has no Title X funded clinics, Adams said, and if Planned Parenthood were to disappear in the area, that would result in a significant gap in coverage.

Adams, however, added that Tippecanoe's demographics bode well in terms of sustained demand for Planned Parenthood.

"We know there is a younger population in Tippecanoe because you have the university and other resources that pulls the age down," Adams said. A lot of times, communities with aging populations see a drop in clinic traffic, according to Adams. The trend in clinic closures is not unique to Indiana, according to Adams, who said it is happening on a national level. A lot of it, she said, had to do with the reasons

Slocum named. She added, however, that funding for the clinics also is an issue. Title X has been flat funded for the past decade, meaning the funding does not increase with the cost of inflation and services. Even with the Affordable Care Act, Adams said, 66 percent of patients at clinics funded by the council were uninsured in 2015.

Ultimately, Planned Parenthood is simply evolving to reflect its resources and the changing demographics facing many family planning clinics in the state and country, Adams said.

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PLANNED PARENTHOOD CLINICS INCLUDED IN THE RESTRUCTURING:

» July 15, Muncie Closing » July 20, Terre Haute closing on July 20 » July 21, Valparaiso merging with Merrillville health center

» July 26, Fishers merging with Eastside PPINK health center

» Aug. 30, Avon merging on with Southside PPINK health center

» Dec. 15, East Chicago: merging with Gary PPINK health center

Journal & Courier

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