

Abortion rate continues to drop in Indiana, report says

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The number of abortions performed in Indiana dropped to 7,277 in 2016, a decrease of 8.5 percent over the previous year, according to state data released in late June.

Anti-abortion advocates attributed the decline to new abortion laws in the state, while advocates for abortion rights credited preventative health care for reducing unintended pregnancies.

The report follows increased restrictions on abortions passed in recent years by the conservative-dominated Indiana legislature, led by Vice President Mike Pence, formerly Indiana's governor. Several provisions, including a ban on abortions sought solely because of a fetal diagnosis of a disability, have been legally challenged and temporarily suspended by the courts.

Indiana Right to Life said it projected abortion numbers would have decreased even more dramatically had those laws gone into effect. But the group thinks that discussion around the policies helped elevate conversations to lead more women to choose not to have abortions.

"The pro-life policies set forth by then-Gov. Mike Pence and pro-life leaders in the General Assembly made a life over death difference for Hoosier women and children in 2016," Mike Fichter, president and CEO of Indiana Right to Life, said in a statement.

Indiana Right to Life noted that abortions were not performed for the first year in decades at the Women's Pavilion in St. Joseph County. In 2015, longtime abortion provider Dr. Ulrich "George" Klopfer, facing legal violations, gave up the clinic's license. His medical license was suspended the next year.

As other clinics have closed, Indiana Right to Life criticized Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky for taking on a larger share of abortion services in the state. While the total number of abortions statewide has declined, the number of abortions performed by Planned Parenthood has increased, the group said.

"The fact is that no one in the state of Indiana does more to help Hoosiers prevent unintended pregnancies, which lowers the rate of abortion, than PPINK," said Christie Gillespie, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky, in a statement. "Research shows that access to birth control and comprehensive sex education, both offered by PPINK, are the most effective interventions to reducing abortion."

The 2016 data held mostly to trends of previous years: More than 90 percent of the reported abortions were performed on Indiana residents. The average age of women who had abortions was 25. Patients were most likely to be unmarried, and they also were most likely to have a high school diploma as the highest level of education achieved.