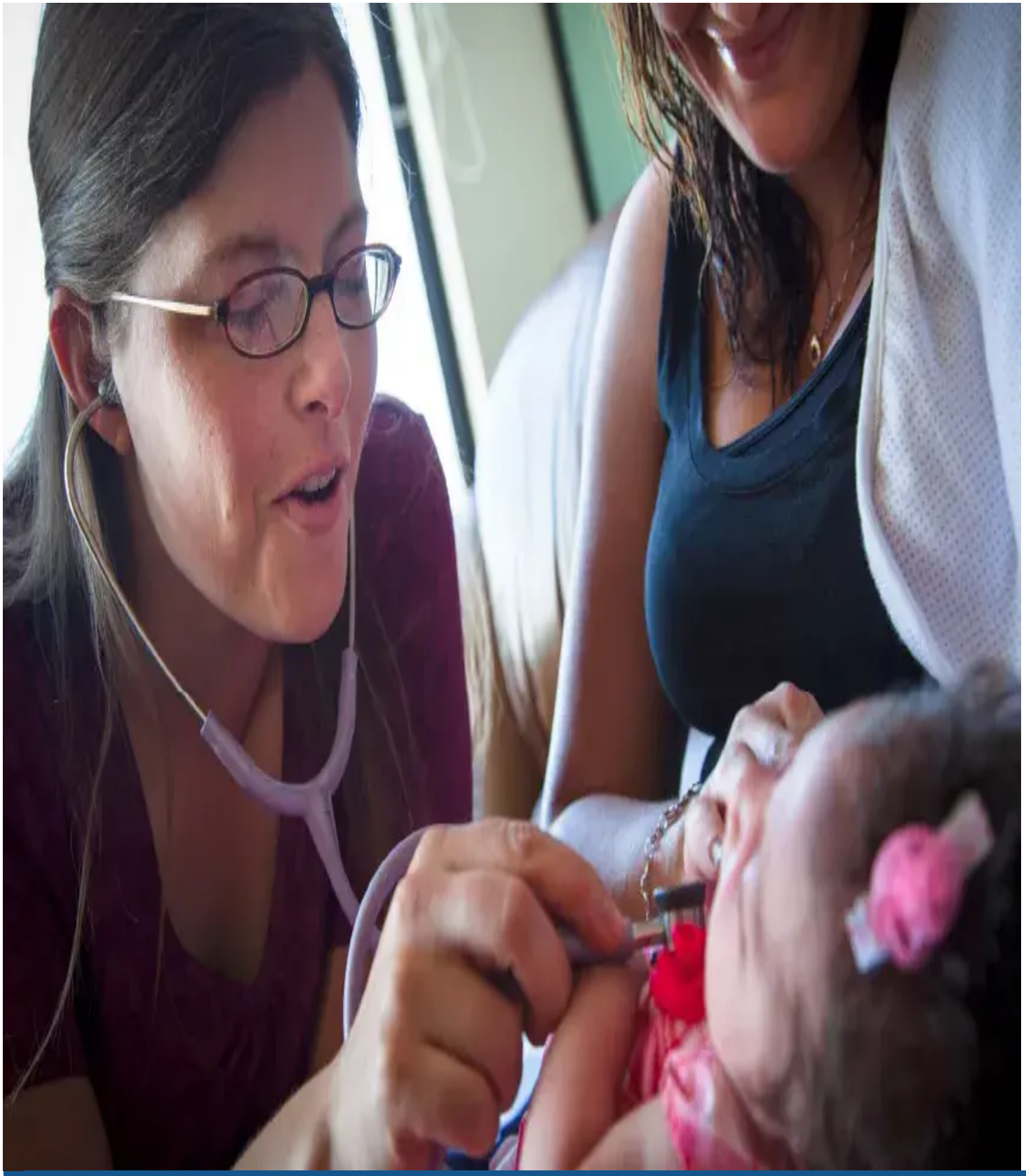
The Colorado Health Foundation™



Proposed Contraceptive Coverage Regulations Threaten the Health of Women and their Families

A few weeks ago, I had the honor of meeting with several young women in southeastern Colorado. Many of them were preparing to graduate from high school or already in college, pursuing careers and building their dreams for the future. We talked about the things that worry them and the barriers they face every day. Shortly after meeting, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Justice Department proposed a change in federal regulations that, if adopted, would allow more employers to deny insurance coverage for family planning services – a move that would undoubtedly put health further out of reach for many Colorado women, their children and families.

When this rule was proposed, I immediately thought of those young women, and so many others across our state, who deserve to have access to family planning services and affordable contraceptives to live healthy lives. Including contraceptive coverage in insurance plans has increased access to a full range of contraceptive methods and family planning services for millions of women – especially for those who need them the most.

At the Colorado Health Foundation, we work to bring health in reach to all Coloradans. We believe that health is a basic human right. And, we fear this proposed rule could jeopardize too many lives and bright futures to not have a voice in the matter. We have seen the benefits of bringing affordable contraception and family planning services in reach to more women in Colorado. These benefits include:

- Supporting healthy starts for babies;
- Strengthening women's overall health; and

- Bolstering both educational and economic opportunities for Colorado families.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado's teen birth rate and the number of abortions for teenagers and young women have dramatically dropped because of improved access to contraceptives and other vital family planning services. Since 2008, the birth rate for young women aged 15-19 has been cut by more than half, falling by 53 percent, and for women aged 20-24 by 30 percent.

Having access to women's health and family planning services allows women to continue their education, further their careers and do more of what they and their families need to in order to live healthy lives. Bringing affordable contraception and family planning services in reach for Colorado women empowers them to make thoughtful and informed decisions on when and if to start a family.

As a woman, a mother and the leader of this organization, I am hard pressed to ignore the fact that this proposed rule change could not only slow the progress our state has seen on reducing teen birth rates and abortions, but reverse it.

Our Foundation has authored a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Justice Department asking them to strongly consider the impact of this proposed rule and reject it. We encourage you to keep this important conversation alive by sharing the below resources, along with compelling stories of women and their families who have experienced the benefits of family planning services.

Resources

- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: Taking the Unintended Out of Pregnancy: Colorado's Success with Long-Acting Reversible Contraception

- Kaiser Family Foundation: New Regulations Broadening Employer Exemptions to Contraceptive Coverage: Impact on Women
- Colorado Health Institute: The Battle for Birth Control Heats Up
- Colorado Foundations Letter to Congressional Delegation

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Blog

POST DATE

Oct 24, 2017

BY

Karen McNeil-Miller