



ILLINOIS MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH COALITION

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Testimony on Privacy and Minor's Health Records Submitted July 12, 2012

On behalf of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition (IMCHC), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

IMCHC is a statewide, nonprofit organization that focuses on the promotion and improvement of health outcomes for women, children, and their families through advocacy, education, and community empowerment. For over two decades, we have fought for affordable, high-quality health care, and would like to present testimony on behalf of our members and their clients and patients.

As a coalition with a vested interest in improving the quality of care for patients across the state of Illinois, we applaud the development and implementation of the Illinois Health Information Exchange. We believe that the increase in coordination and reduction in administrative costs will have tangible benefits for all Illinoisans.

In order to protect a vulnerable population in this new system, we encourage the Exchange Authority to be particularly vigilant in protecting the confidentiality of minors' health records. Current Illinois state law assures minors the right to a wide variety of health services without the consent or knowledge of their parents or legal guardians. Minors across the state can confidentially access mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, birth control services, HIV testing, sexually transmitted infection treatment, along with a wide array of medical services after a rape or sexual assault.¹

Minors' ability to access these services confidentially, and to keep their medical history private, is championed by many health professionals and advocates as essential in encouraging young people to access comprehensive health services. The American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine have issued statements asserting that confidential health services, specifically reproductive health services, should be available to minors.²

Parental involvement and knowledge may deter some minors from accessing the health care they require. In 1998, McHenry County, Illinois mandated parental involvement for minors seeking contraception. In 1999 and 2000, the proportion of births to women under the age of 19 increased while it decreased in nearby counties with similar socioeconomic and ethnic demographics.³ This aligns with the American Medical Association's finding that less than 20% of teens would seek care related to birth control, sexually transmitted infections, and drug abuse if parental involvement were mandated.⁴

¹ "Children Mental Health Fact Sheet: Illinois Consent & Confidentiality Laws". http://www.cico-il.org/legislation/childrens_health.html

² "Confidential Reproductive Health Services for Minors: The Potential Impact of Mandated Parental Involvement for Contraception." <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3618204.html>

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⁴ Council of Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association. Confidential health services for adolescents. JAMA. 1993; 269: 1420-1424

Adolescents are simply less likely to access care without the guarantee of confidentiality. Therefore, assuring the privacy of their medical records is critically important.

We hope that you will use IMCHC as a resource on this issue. If you have additional questions, please contact Kathy Chan, IMCHC's Director of Policy and Advocacy at 312-491-8161x24 or at kchan@ilmaternal.org.

Thank you, once again, for your efforts in safeguarding minors' health records in the implementation of the Illinois Health Information Exchange.