

Know Your Rights

Did you know? It is **illegal to discriminate** against health care providers that refuse to participate in or refer for **abortion, sterilization, or assisted suicide**.

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, you can file a complaint through the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Civil Rights. For instance:

- You were threatened with losing your job or career opportunities because you refused to participate in specific medical procedures, including abortion and sterilization, and related training or research
- You were forced to perform procedures that are against your religious or moral values
- You refused to provide health care items or services for the purpose of causing, or assisting in causing, the death of an individual, such as by assisted suicide or euthanasia

Unfortunately, Federal law does not cover every circumstance. For more information or to file a complaint, go to www.hhs.gov/conscience/complaints/filing-a-complaint/ You may also reach out to Freedom2Care to relate your experience, let others know they are not alone, and help to ensure the conscience rights of health care providers are enforced. Go to: www.freedom2care.org/stories.

Federal laws have been in place since the 1970s to protect health care providers from being forced into abortion procedures or other actions. For example:

Church (1973) – 1. Health care providers and hospitals **may not be required**, over their religious or moral objection, **to perform or assist in sterilization procedures or abortions**, or to be discriminated against for refusing to participate. 2. Individuals have the right to refuse to participate in any part of a federally-funded health service program or research activity that is contrary to their religious beliefs or moral convictions. 3. **Applicants for training or study** (including residencies and internships) **may not be denied admission** or otherwise penalized for their unwillingness to counsel, assist, or in any way participate in abortions or sterilizations due to their religious or moral objections.

Coats-Snowe (1996) - **Health care entities** (including individual health care providers and programs of training) **may not be required to perform, train in, arrange, or refer for abortion** nor be discriminated against for not having or requiring such training.

Weldon (2004) - Institutional and individual health care providers and **insurers may not be forced to provide, pay for, cover, or refer for abortion**.

ACA (2010) – **Health plans offered through an Exchange may not be forced to cover abortion, nor may the plans discriminate against individual health care providers and facilities** because of their unwillingness to provide pay for, cover, or refer for abortion. Federal, state, and local governments, health care providers that receive federal funds under ACA, and **health plans created under ACA, are also forbidden to discriminate** against individual and institutional health care providers for not providing any item or service **for the purpose of assisted suicide**.

Visit www.hhs.gov/conscience/ and www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection for more information.