

Teenage abortion rates are soaring. Today, teenage abortion has become a complicated issue. How are teenagers affected by abortion? We are faced with the decision of "who chooses", the parents or their pregnant teenage daughter. Is there danger in parental involvement laws? While most parents are informed and support their daughter's decision whatever the decision may be, other parents do not get informed about their daughter's pregnancy or about getting an abortion. Instead they have illegal abortions or travel outside of the state to have an abortion because it is illegal in their home state. Because of this situation, parents have a right to know when their teenage daughter is having an abortion so they can know if any complications occur after the procedure.

These teenagers are going through this because they are becoming sexually active at a very young age. Their hormones are surging as they begin to deal with adult roles and expectations about sexual behavior (Crews 2005). They believe that they can handle the responsibilities of being sexually active with many sexual partners until they find out that they have contracted a sexually transmitted disease or got pregnant. When they find out that they are pregnant, it becomes very hard on them and the parents, and while some decide to go through the pregnancy and keep the baby others decide on abortion. The ones that decide on the abortion are often the ones whose parents do not know about the pregnancy and they go without their parent's knowledge for an abortion. As it was stated earlier that parents should know that their daughter's are getting abortion, but in some circumstances a parent does not need to know if their daughter's are getting an abortion. There are two sides to this issue of teen abortion and parental rights that will be argued on later but first let's discuss abortion and the history of it.

Abortion is when the embryo or fetus is removed from the uterus resulting in or caused by death. Britannica Encyclopaedia Article, states that abortion can also occur through a miscarriage or

induced through chemical, surgical or other means.

Abortion has been traced back to ancient times. There is evidence that historically pregnancies were terminated through many methods, like the administration of abortifacient herbs, the use of sharpened implements, the application of abdominal pressure, and other procedures (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2009). Also back then, women believed they could end their pregnancy by doing violent exercises, energetic jumping, riding animals, and carrying heavy objects.

There are four forms of abortions that can be done to terminate the pregnancy. There is Spontaneous abortion, which is generally known as a miscarriage which happens due to natural causes. Most miscarriages happen in early pregnancy. Then there is Induced abortion, where a miscarriage happens either accidental or intentional.

The most common surgical method for an abortion is when the embryo or fetus is suctioned out by using a manual syringe, known as a Manual vacuum aspiration or by the electric pump that is known as an Electric vacuum aspiration.

Another form is D&E, which is called surgical dilation and evacuation where you open up the cervix of the uterus and emptying it using surgical instruments and suction. The last form of abortion is Chemical abortion which is also referred to as a medical abortion. Chemical abortion can be caused by certain drugs, administered in varying ways, which act upon the hormones of the mother to create a situation in which a newly-formed human being, known as a zygote or embryo at this stage, cannot survive. Most of these chemicals are used in combination, one drug to ensure that the embryo is killed, and a second to induce contractions so that the dead embryo is expelled from the uterus of the mother (Life site news, 2009). When used right, about 98% of women undergoing this procedure will experience the abortion without surgical

intervention. With all this said about abortion and how it is performed, abortion in general is topic of controversy, but teenage abortion is much more controversial because of the legal issues surrounding it.

About 20 percent of all abortions taking place in the United States today are performed on teens. For teenagers that are facing abortion, they encounter psychological, social, and philosophical issues. These issues include drug and alcohol abuse, suicide attempts and suicidal ideation, and other self-destructive behaviors. Compared to women who have abortions in adulthood, teens are two to four times more likely to commit suicide. Teens are more likely to have troubled relationships. Teens are nearly three times more likely to be admitted to mental health hospitals than women in general. (Sobie and Reardon 2001).

After the Roe v Wade case in 1973 that decided that a woman had the right to choose, limited abortion rights were granted to minors. As a result of this, many states are enacting various forms of parental notification and consent laws. In most states, the law requires that parents of teenagers provide written approval to get an abortion or be notified by a physician. There is an ongoing debate about the notification of parents on abortion. Most mothers and fathers of teens are angry about confidentiality laws that come between them and their children (Nicholson 2003). Doctors need the legal freedom to be truthful with the parents. Nicholson (2003) states that she tries to encourage mothers of teenage daughters to take them in early for ob/gyn care, not only to establish a relationship with the physician, but it also encourages the mother to recognize that their daughter is now fertile and must take up the responsibilities of sexual activity. So, if an adolescent pregnancy happens, it is more likely to be handled within the context of the family.

When the United State Senate was preparing to debate the Child Custody Protection Act, the pro-life advocates were worried that the Democrats proposed amendments to the bill would undermine its intent (Larkins 2006). The Child Custody Protection Act is a bill that would prohibit anyone other than a parent or a guardian of a minor from taking the minor across state lines to an abortion. The NARAL, Pro-Choice America, which is one of the nation's most aggressive abortion rights advocates, argues that the Child Custody Protection Act is dangerous and divisive (Larkins 2006). There are only six states without laws that require either parental consent or notification for minors seeking abortions according to the National Conference of State legislatures. The six states are Connecticut, Hawaii, New York, Oregon, Vermont and Washington State. As a result, those six states have become destinations for minors seeking abortions without having to tell their parents. Democratic Senators, Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer of California, proposed amendments that would weaken the bill (Larkins 2006). Feinstein's amendment allows grandparents or members of the clergy to take a minor out of state for an abortion. Boxer's amendment proposes that the bill not apply to any minor who has an abortion as a result of pregnancy by incest. The director of government relations for Concerned Woman for America is concerned that Feinstein's amendment would require anyone to go online and complete an ordination process to become a clergyman. They are also concerned that the Boxer amendment would allow a sibling, who has gotten his sister pregnant, to take the girl across state line to get an abortion. These amendments that Feinstein and Boxer are trying to pass undermine the Child Protection Act, which is to protect the parent's authority with their child. Another bill, called the child Interstate Abortion Notification Act or CIANA makes it a federal offense to transport minors across state lines for an abortion in order to avoid parental notification law, unless the minor gets a waiver from the judge. This bill also requires the doctor

to notify the minor's parent before performing the abortion, if the minor is from another state (Feldman 2005).

The biggest danger of parental involvement laws, is that they can delay a girl's access to medical care. Adolescents, particularly younger teens, often don't recognize the signs of pregnancy. Legal and judicial barriers further delay their seeking help and could push an abortion into the second trimester, when it is more dangerous and more expensive. "Although only 10 percent of all abortions in the United States are performed in the second trimester, 23 percent of the abortions performed on adolescents under age 15 are in the second trimester. Deaths caused by abortion are estimated to rise about 20 percent for each week of gestation from the 8th to the 15th week of pregnancy, and 50 percent after that, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists" (Clark 1991).

In the state of Maine, a teen must have consent for an abortion. A parent or an adult family member such as a sister, uncle, aunt or grandparent over the age of 18 may provide consent. A teen may not obtain an abortion unless the attending physician has a written consent of one parent or adult family member. The parental mandate cannot be waived even if the teen is a victim of rape, incest or child abuse. The only way that the parental mandate can be waived is if the teen can obtain permission from the judge. The process that the teen must go through is to secure a court order either granting her majority rights for the sole purpose of consenting to get an abortion or stating that an abortion is in her best interest. "The law also requires a teen to get counseling from a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, nurse, physician's assistance, clergy member, or qualified counselor. Counseling must include: (1) the alternative choices for managing pregnancy; (2) information on prenatal care, alternatives to abortion, and agencies providing assistance; and (3) the possibility of involving her parents or other adult family

members. The attending physician also must inform the minor of: (1) the number of weeks of the pregnancy's duration; and (2) the risks of pregnancy and the proposed abortion procedure" (NARAL Pro-Choice America 2009).

The reason that teens make the decision to abort the baby is because of the attitude of parents, the baby's father, and peers. They are put at a higher risk for psychological effects after the abortion because of pressure from their parents or sexual partners. Teens are also at a higher risk for post-abortion infections such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and endometritis (inflammation on the uterus), which is caused by the spread of an unrecognized sexually transmitted disease into the uterus during the abortion or by micro-organisms on the surgical instruments which are inserted into the uterus. It is also believed that teens are more susceptible to infections because their bodies are not yet fully developed and do not produce pathogens that are found in the cervical mucus of older women and which can protect them from infection (Sobie and Reardon 2001).

With all these laws about teen abortions and the parents need to be notified, I believe that the parents should be notified even though they have poor communication with their teen daughters to talk to them about sex and tell them what can happen if they have unprotected sex. If they know that abortion is about to take place then they can be there for their daughter. A federal study released in August 1990 indicated the teen birthrate rose in 1988 for the first time in 18 years, particularly among girls ages 15–17. Jacqueline Darroch Forrest, vice president for research and planning of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit research group once affiliated "with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, expressed concern that stepped-up publicity about parental notification and consent laws may have dissuaded pregnant teens from seeking abortions. "Young kids who may be hearing this discussion may get the wrong

understanding that either abortion is not allowed for them or they have to have the consent of their parents” (Clark 1991).

There are situations that the parents do not need to be notified because the teen could be from an abusive home or where incest is going on. If a father or brother has raped the daughter or sister, the parent should not be notified. For fear that the father would become abusive towards the teen because she is pregnant and wants to abort the baby. In this situation, there should not be a law to inform parents of an abortion. As it was stated earlier, I do not believe in abortion but when a teen is impregnated by a member of her family it should be done because it has quite the psychological impact on the teen. I don't think abortion should be done when a girl has sex and she willingly accepts it. I believe if a girl has sex, she is accepting everything that comes with it even getting pregnant, and need to do use good judgment and practice safe sex.

No one has the right to take the life of a pre born baby even if they do not want it. There are other options for teens to consider if they do not want to be a parent. They could put the baby up for adoption. There are many couples that cannot have children and would love to adopt a baby. If they do not want to get pregnant then they should not be having unprotected sex in the first place.

In conclusion, abortion among teen is a complicated issue. Teens need their parent's support to help them get through the effects that abortion may have on them. The effects of teenage abortion will stay with them throughout their lives without the proper counseling.

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