



Medication Abortion Access at California Public Universities

Students forced to seek an abortion off-campus encounter multiple challenges, such as out-of-pocket costs, travel time, and scheduling delays. Student health centers could easily offer medication abortion, known as the abortion pill, and greatly improve access for students.

There is a clear need for abortion services among college students in California.

- Every month, it is estimated that over 1,000 students across the 34 University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses **must travel off campus for an abortion.**¹
- **Up to 519 students each month opt for a medication abortion**, also known as the abortion pill.¹

Medication abortion, or the abortion pill, is non-invasive and very safe and effective.

- Medication abortion involves taking 2 medicines, usually 1-2 days apart to induce an abortion. **This treatment is safe and highly effective**, with a success rate of over 95 percent.²
- Medication abortion has a **better safety record than Tylenol, Viagra, and even penicillin.**³
- People can opt for a medication abortion **up to 10 weeks of pregnancy.**⁴

Going off-campus for abortion care can interrupt coursework, cost more, and delay care to the point where medication abortion is not an option.

- For most campuses, travel time to the closest abortion provider via public transportation would be 2 hours for the minimum requirement of 2 appointments. **Five campuses are located more than 1 hour away, resulting in up to 4 hours of travel time.**¹
- The average out-of-pocket cost of medication abortion was \$604 in 2018.¹ However, UC's student insurance plan covers medication abortion.⁵ **If students are unable to use their insurance off campus, they may face high out-of-pocket costs.**

- Only five of the abortion facilities closest to UC and CSU campuses (15% of all facilities) were open on weekends, and the wait time for an appointment at all facilities ranged from 1 to 20 days.¹ **With a significant delay, students may exceed the gestational limit of 10 weeks and no longer be eligible for a medication abortion.**

It is feasible to provide medication abortion at student health centers.

- Because the additional staffing, facility, and equipment requirements to offer the abortion pill are minimal, **it is very feasible to provide this service at all of the UC and CSU student health centers.**⁵
- **Medication abortion is already being provided safely and effectively** in primary care sites very similar to student health centers.

Access to abortion care is important to college participation and gender equity.

- Women who have a child while in college are less likely to graduate than those who do not.⁶ 89% of students say that **having a child while in school would make it harder to achieve their goals.**⁷
- The necessity of leaving campus and navigating a new healthcare system for this service while other healthcare services can be obtained on campus **unfairly burdens women and others who may need an abortion.**

Medication abortion should be made available at California Public Universities.

Offering medication abortion at student health centers at UC and CSU campuses is feasible, preferred by students and would reduce travel, logistical, and cost burdens to students.

References:

1. Upadhyay UD, Cartwright AF, Johns N. Access to Medication Abortion Among California’s Public University Students. August 2018. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 63(2):249-252.
2. Upadhyay UD, Desai S, Zlidar V, Weitz TA, Grossman D, Anderson P, Taylor D. Incidence of emergency department visits and complications after abortion. January 2015. *Obstet Gynecol.*, 125(1):175-183.
3. Grossman D, Raifman S. Analysis of Medication Abortion Risk and the FDA report “Mifepristone U.S. Post-Marketing Adverse Events Summary through 12/31/2018”. April 2019.
4. FDA. Mifeprex (mifepristone) Information—Postmarket Drug Safety Information for Patients and Providers. 2016.
5. Raifman S, Anderson P, Kaller S, Tober D, Grossman D. Evaluating the capacity of California’s publicly funded universities to provide medication abortion. October 2018. *Contraception*, 98(4):306-311.
6. U.S. Department of Education, 2002, “Short-term Enrollment in Postsecondary Education”: nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003153.pdf.
7. American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, “Make It Personal: How Pregnancy Planning and Prevention Help Students Complete College”: powertodecide.org/sites/default/files/resources/primary-download/make-it-personal.pdf

For more information visit: ansirh.org/campusaccessMAB