

# CAMPAIGN TO ADOPT-A-CLINIC

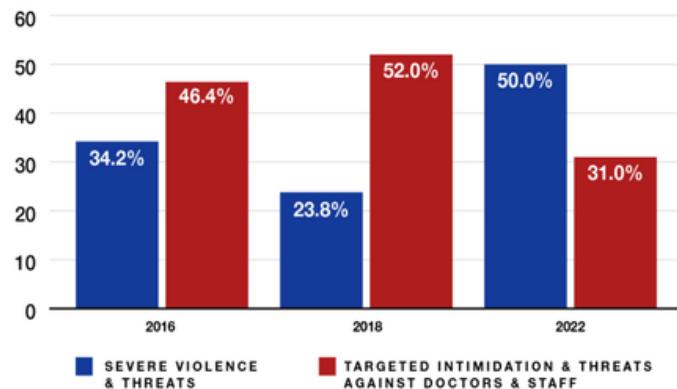
## VIOLENCE AGAINST REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CLINICS

Since the 1970s, anti-abortion extremists have targeted reproductive health care providers as a part of an orchestrated campaign of violence and intimidation. Many clinics have suffered arson, butyric acid attacks, and death threats, as well as demonstrations and harassment. In the 1990s, anti-abortion violence turned deadly and has now claimed the lives of 11 people – doctors, clinic workers, first responders, and patients' family and friends – and injured many more.

Anti-abortion violence has steadily decreased since its peak in 1994 due to grassroots organizing initiatives spearheaded by the Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), as well as the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act and various state laws. But violence against reproductive health care providers is once again on the rise.

In 2015, the so-called Center for Medical Progress (CMP), a virulent new anti-abortion group, emerged and began releasing surreptitiously recorded videos falsely accusing Planned Parenthood of operating an unlawful fetal tissue and organ donation program. The group was cofounded by Troy Newman, leader of national anti-abortion organization Operation Rescue (OR) that moved its headquarters to Wichita, Kansas in 2001 in order to target Dr. George Tiller relentlessly. Dr. Tiller was murdered in 2009 by an anti-abortion extremist who had

Percentage of Clinics Experiencing Targeted Threats and Intimidation Against Doctors and Staff and Percentage of Clinics Experiencing Severe Violence  
2016 - 2022



participated in OR protests. The false and dangerous propaganda produced by CMP, targeted efforts led by anti-abortion groups to harass clinic providers and patients, and incendiary political rhetoric and actions from state and federal officials have all worked together to sow hostility towards abortion providers and seekers, and have ultimately increased anti-abortion violence and threats.

Just a few months after the deceptive CMP videos were released in 2015, Robert Lewis Dear, Jr. shot and killed three people and injured nine others at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs. Dear's rampage was one of the worst acts of anti-abortion terrorism in the U.S. During his arrest, Dear used the phrase "no more baby parts," leading many to believe that his motivation for attacking the clinic was related to the release of the misleading videos. Even now, these videos continue to be re-packaged and re-released.

Most reproductive health clinics provide a whole range of services including gynecological and prenatal care, routine cancer screening, HIV testing, menopausal treatment, infertility treatment, sexually transmitted infection screening and treatment, and adoption and family planning services.

According to the Feminist Majority Foundation's most recent National Clinic Violence Survey, 23.8% of all abortion providers experienced one or more

incidents of severe violence or threats of violence in 2018, down from 34.2% in 2016. Examples of these incidents include blocking clinic access, invasions, bombings, arson, chemical attacks, stalking, physical violence, gunfire, bomb threats, death threats, and arson threats. Moreover, some 63.2% of reproductive health clinics nationwide experience frequent and regular anti-abortion protests. 45% of clinics experienced one severe threat ranging from break-in to robberies. There has been little help from law enforcement.

## CURRENT ATTACKS

In March of 2021, Operation Save America (OSA), an anti-abortion extremist group based in Texas, blockaded the entrance of a Nashville clinic for almost three hours in an attempt to stop patients and employees from entering the facility. On January 30th, 2024, a jury decided on a verdict for a group of anti-abortion extremists who participated in the blockade at the abortion clinic.

Six anti-abortion extremists were found guilty of obstructing the Carafem abortion clinic and face up to 11 years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000. The official sentencing hearing is scheduled for July 2, 2024. Four others involved in the blockade will be tried for violating the FACE Act. Up to one year in prison and fines of up to \$10,000 are possible if they are convicted.

During the blockade, OSA extremists verbally assaulted and physically threatened patients. They proceeded to yell disgusting remarks at patients who

were seeking reproductive care: "See, what you got here is a mom who's coming to kill her baby." They prevented patients from coming into the clinic, and those that did make it in were forced to leave by the OSA extremists. Several OSA leaders and followers have advocated for "justifiable homicide," the use of lethal force, to stop doctors from providing abortion care.

On October 22nd, 2020, extremists invaded and blockaded a D.C. abortion clinic. Nine co-conspirators were indicted for planning and carrying out the invasion. The case marked the first time that the Justice Department has charged anti-abortion extremists with a violation of the civil rights conspiracy statute, in conjunction with the FACE Act. The civil rights conspiracy statute prohibits "two or more persons conspiring to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any person." This case was a historic battle as it set precedent for future cases that involve unlawful behavior of anti-abortion extremists.

Online harassment of clinic staff and physicians is also increasing. Operation Rescue's website AbortionDocs.org has been gathering and publishing information about doctors and clinic staff since 2011. The site features the spurious Center for Medical Progress videos, including one which was embedded in a page about the Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood that was attacked in 2015. OR's website also still features Dr. George Tiller, even though he was murdered in 2009. The website is a terrible and dangerous compilation of private and public information including photographs, medical licenses, videos, clinic and home addresses, and more information about doctors, staff, and clinics that provide medical and surgical abortions.

In many states, anti-abortion extremists have harassed physicians and clinic staff at their homes, private offices, clinics, hospitals, children's schools, and on social media. They create posters, flyers, tweets, and Facebook posts displaying

the photographs, names, home addresses, and other private information of providers, using slogans like "Call Out the Killers" or "Killers Among Us." These kinds of Wild West "WANTED"-style flyers and tactics have been used to target doctors who were ultimately murdered, including Dr. Tiller.

In 2017, in response to the increase in violence, threats, and intimidation, FMF launched a bold new initiative: "When did the right to life become the right to terrorize?" taking on groups like OR and its president Troy Newman, as well as Operation Save America.

What is happening to doctors, patients, and clinics across the country is unacceptable harassment and intimidation – but you can make a difference. Since 1987, the Feminist Majority Foundation has trained over 67,000 volunteers, many of them college students, to defend and support reproductive health care providers under siege by anti-abortion extremist groups.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS AGAINST ANTI-ABORTION VIOLENCE**

In 1994, national abortion rights advocates secured a victory with the passing of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. The FACE Act creates federal civil and criminal penalties for anyone who intentionally uses force or the threat of force to injure, intimidate, or interfere with access to reproductive health services. That same year, FMF's legal team won a major U.S. Supreme Court case in *Madsen v. Women's Health Center* establishing the constitutional right for clinics to secure buffer/safety zones.

Many states, counties, and cities have passed buffer and bubble zone laws to provide additional protection for clinics. Buffer zone laws prohibit anti-abortion protesters from "congregating, picketing, patrolling, demonstrating or entering" a specific area

near a facility. Bubble zone laws create floating areas of several feet around a clinic staff member and patient, or a vehicle, and prohibit protesters from coming within a certain distance of the specified person or vehicle.

In the 2014 case *McCullen v. Coakley*, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Massachusetts statute that created a 35-foot fixed buffer zone around reproductive health care facilities, finding that the Massachusetts law was not tailored narrowly enough and there were less burdensome alternatives available to the state. In spite of this ruling, narrowly-tailored buffer zones have survived other legal challenges and continue to be passed by municipalities. Bubble zone laws, untouched by the *McCullen* decision, remain another option for cities.

California, New York, North Carolina, and Washington have all enacted tougher state FACE laws to provide even greater protection for reproductive health care providers. States including Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, and Oregon prohibit the obstruction of clinic entrances and exits.

State laws and ordinances prohibiting excessive or amplified noise around a health care facility are also useful tools in reducing sound pollution and harassment targeting many clinics.

In 2025, President Trump instructed the Department of Justice not to prosecute any FACE Act cases. He also pardoned 23 extremists on January 24th, 2025 who were sentenced to prison for a blockade of an abortion clinic.

## **WHAT IS THE ADOPT-A-CLINIC CAMPAIGN?**

Feminist Majority Leadership Alliances and Feminist Campus organizers can support reproductive health care providers that are the targets of harassment and intimidation by “adopting” their local clinic. Mobilizing for reproductive rights is crucial to reducing anti-abortion violence and harassment. By “adopting” a local clinic, you can help to improve anti-abortion harassment, bolster the morale of the clinic and its staff, and bring community attention to misogynist protesters. Grassroots mobilization is critical to protecting abortion care.

# GETTING STARTED

1

Contact FMF's National Campus Organizer to locate the nearest reproductive health clinic that needs assistance. Our National Campus Organizer will coordinate with the Feminist Majority Foundation's National Clinic Access Project. Get in touch with our National Campus Organizer via email at [campusteam@feminist.org](mailto:campusteam@feminist.org) or by phone at 703-522-2214.

2

Utilize our National Campus Organizer. They can support your group by:

- Calling the clinic and identifying your group as affiliated with the Feminist Majority Foundation.
- Requesting that the clinic director or a representative meet with your group to talk about the services they provide and issues they have with anti-abortion protesters.
- Notifying them that your group wants to show support for the clinic and asking what kind of help they need. Not all clinics want or need community support, so we will ask how your group can engage.

3

Develop a plan of action. The clinic director or staff will have a clear idea about what would help improve safety, security, and morale of staff and patients.

- **Legal Observation:** When protesters believe their activities are being monitored and recorded, they are more likely to tone down their actions. The clinic may need your help videotaping, documenting, and photographing anti-abortion protesters and their activities.
- **Escorting:** The clinic may need you to help facilitate the safe passage of patients, staff, doctors, and/or family members and friends of patients to and from the facility. They may already have a volunteer escort program, or you can be trained by FMF.
- **Call of Action:** The clinic may need you to help call attention to the problems they face. They may want you to circulate campus petitions in support of the clinic, organize events or rallies, or build community support.
- **Community Support:** A clinic may want you to come and publicly show your support with signs supporting abortion access, particularly on days of high activity by protestors. Your presence makes a statement that there are reproductive freedom advocates in the community, helps patients cope with extremists, and shows extremists that the patients are supported.

4

Connect clinics to the Feminist Majority Foundation's National Clinic Access Project. If the clinic would like additional assistance, contact your National Campus Organizer. We'll connect them with FMF's National Clinic Access Project directly.