



YOUNG WOMEN'S STORIES

Mandated parental involvement in a young woman's abortion decision does not improve family communication and for many young women imposes serious and irreversible harm. These are just some of the stories:

Harms of Forced Parental Notice

Young women beaten after pregnancy disclosed

- A young woman confided in her favorite teacher about being pregnant. The teacher told the principal, who called her mother. When she came home from school, her mother was furious. That night when she was asleep, her mother came into her room, turned on the light, threw off her covers, tore her clothes off, and beat her with a cord.
- A 16-year-old girl had not previously been physically abused; however, when her brother and father discovered that she was pregnant, they beat her severely.

Young women fearing/experiencing being thrown out of home after pregnancy revealed

- A thirteen year old from Massachusetts, a state with a parental involvement law, was raped by her mother's boyfriend. When she became pregnant, she felt that she could not turn to her mother. However, upon learning that in order to have an abortion she would have to either tell her mother or get a court order, she decided that she simply could not face a judge. Left without any other option, she told her mother. Her mother responded by calling her a "slut" and throwing her out of the house.
- At the age of thirteen, a young woman from Missouri saw her sixteen year old sister beaten by her father after she told their parents that she was pregnant and planning to have an abortion. After throwing the sister and all of her clothes out of the house, the father ordered the younger siblings to box their sister's belongings and take them to a dumpster. The entire family was then forbidden from having any further contact with the older sister.
- One young woman had four older sisters, each of whom became pregnant as minors. In response to the news of each sister's pregnancy, the parents threw them out of the house. This young woman was an excellent student, had a college scholarship, and, in general, felt that she had her life ahead of her. Given what she had seen, she feared that, if her

parents found out about her pregnancy, they would throw her out of the house too, destroying her dreams for the future.

- Another young woman had an older sister who was thrown out of the house by her parents when she became pregnant as “punishment for her sin.” Since then, her parents acted as if they had only one daughter. This young woman did not want to lose her family and home, or the sense that she ever even existed for her family.

Young women fearing/experiencing violence and emotional abuse

- One young woman lived with her father, who frightened her most of the time. In addition to fearing for her safety, she chose not to tell him about her pregnancy because she believed he would react by calling her a whore and filing a child in need of supervision petition with the juvenile court—something he had done in the past.
- An adult sister of a pregnant teen disclosed to a clinic that since learning of her sister’s pregnancy, her parents had engaged in a prolonged period of degrading her sister (by, for example, repeatedly calling her a whore and telling her that she was no good) and isolating her from all outside sources of support. The pregnant teen had become so depressed the sister was afraid she would try to kill herself. The older sister thought that the situation was so dire that she called DCFS.

Abortion/adoption prevented through coercion

- One minor was dating a boy of a different nationality of whom her parents did not approve. She became pregnant and was seeking an abortion when her parents learned of her pregnancy. They sent her to India against her will to prevent her from terminating the pregnancy.
- A young woman in Massachusetts refused to involve her parents because they had forced her to carry a previous pregnancy to term against her will, and she was determined not to let that happen again.
- One young woman did not want to involve her parents because she was afraid they would force her to continue the pregnancy as they had her older sister. After her sister told her parents that she was pregnant, they forced her to give birth and put the child up for adoption. Her sister subsequently tried to commit suicide and was institutionalized for depression.
- A young woman attempted to get an abortion at 26 weeks. After she was told that an abortion was no longer an option given the stage of her pregnancy, she decided to place the baby up for adoption. For the rest of her pregnancy she hid her condition from her parents because she was scared that they would force her to keep and raise the child. She went so far as to refuse to be hospitalized for preeclampsia at 32 weeks against medical advice because she feared her parents would become suspicious when she did not come

home. She was desperate to continue to hide her pregnancy, believing it was the only way she could preserve her relationship with her parents.

Young women protecting their parents

- One young woman grew up in a violent home in which her emotionally disturbed brother had attacked her – he was eventually sent to live in a group. She did not share news of her pregnancy or her decision to have an abortion with her parents because she feared that the news of her pregnancy would be stressful and burdensome to her mother who was already struggling with coordinating her brother’s care. She also feared that if she told her mother about the pregnancy she too would be removed from the home.
- One young woman felt she couldn’t tell her parents about her pregnancy and abortion because they were already dealing with the fact that her brother had committed suicide two weeks before.
- In another case, a young woman’s mother had just been diagnosed with a brain tumor, and she did not want to add to her parents’ stress.
- Another young woman did not want to involve parents who were dealing with the fact that her father had just lost his job.
- One young woman did not tell her mother of her pregnancy and abortion because her father had been brutally murdered a few weeks before.

Harms of Judicial Bypass

Burdens of travel to access or avoid judicial bypass

- One straight-A, college-bound young woman came from a family who strongly opposed pre-marital sex and abortion on religious grounds. She was so desperate not to disappoint her parents that she drove hundreds of miles from Minnesota, which has a parental involvement law, to an Illinois clinic so that she could have the abortion without letting her parents down.
- A young woman lived in a town where only one bus went to the court each day. She arrived at the bus station on time, but had to run into the restroom because of her morning sickness. While she was in the bathroom, the bus pulled away. Determined not to miss her hearing which would force her to delay her abortion, she hitchhiked 40 miles to the courthouse, something she had never done before.
- Another young woman had no one she could trust to take her to the courthouse, and had no access to a car, bus or train. Her only option was to arrange to take a taxi about 80 miles to the courthouse, which she did. Unfortunately, the taxi was more expensive than she predicted and she did not have enough money to make it to the courthouse. When she ran out of money, a good distance from the court, she had to get out of the cab at a

subway station. Frightened and unfamiliar with a strange city she had never been to, this resourceful young woman eventually made it to the courthouse. Because she was forced to spend so much of her money on transportation, however, she could no longer afford the abortion without a loan.

Breach of confidentiality because of judicial bypass process

- A Massachusetts school principal learned that a student would be absent from school to attend a bypass hearing. He removed the student from class, drove her home, and informed her mother of both her pregnancy and her desire for an abortion. Her mother forced her to carry her pregnancy to term against her wishes.
- An attorney received a frantic call from her client stating that, although the school was treating her absence as excused, it would nonetheless be noted on her report card. As she routinely achieved perfect attendance, she knew her parents would notice the excused absence and demand an explanation.
- One young woman was in a court corridor waiting for her bypass hearing when her sister's civics class came through on a field trip.
- One young woman ran into a neighbor in the courthouse to attend her bypass hearing.
- One young woman encountered her godmother, who was employed as a court officer.
- One young woman hid in the bathroom to avoid being seen by a family member who worked in the courthouse.
- One young woman ran into her father right outside of the courthouse.
- Just days after a young woman appeared for a judicial bypass hearing, her parents received an anonymous letter from an anti-abortion group informing them of the date, time, and subject of the hearing. The members of an anti-abortion group had seen the young woman in the courthouse and identified her by searching for her face in high school yearbooks.

Attempts to Self-Induce Abortion to Avoid Revealing Pregnancy or Going to Court

- A young woman picked a fight with her brother so he would punch her in the stomach, all in hope of triggering a miscarriage.
- Another young woman threw herself down the stairs in hope of disrupting the pregnancy.
- One young woman was so scared that her parents would find out about her unintended pregnancy, she tried to overdose on over-the-counter medication.

- In a well publicized case from Indiana, a teen, desperate to end her pregnancy without her parents' knowledge, had an illegal abortion and died from complications.