

Ruling denies 5-29-91 help for poor, clinic head says

By Tina Shelton

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with wire reports

Local and state Planned Parenthood officials are criticizing a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court affecting federally funded family planning clinics, while Right to Life officials are praising it.

In a 5-4 ruling May 23, the Court said family planning clinics cannot discuss abortion with pregnant women or tell them where to get one.

The Court said the ban, contained in regulations issued by the Reagan administration in 1988, does not violate free-speech rights or women's right to end their pregnancies.

The ruling will affect seven affiliates of Planned Parenthood of Indiana and their clinics, and Wabash Valley Human Services in Vincennes, said Dinah Farrington, the state executive director of Planned Parenthood.

Indiana's Planned Parenthood clinics serve thousands of women annually, many with low incomes, she said.

"It is a devastating decision. It is creating a two-tier system of health care in the U.S. — high quality care for affluent women and low quality care for poor women," said Judith Klein, medical director at Planned Parenthood of Southern Indiana.

"It's almost tantamount to saying poor women can't have an abortion, even though it's legal."

But Mary Jo Brough, president

of Monroe County Right To Life, said Planned Parenthood's main function is not to give health care.

"They're in the abortion business, not the health care business," Brough said.

She said studies have shown that for every one woman who gets prenatal care at Planned Parenthood, 32 women have abortions.

Robert Land, a member of Indiana Right to Life board of directors, said the decision indicates Justice David Souter, who sided with the majority, is "with the pro-life majority."

"We are further pleased to see that federal money will not be used to herd women into the abortion industry, to their detriment," Land said. "We view this as a further protection for the lives, health and safety of women and children."

Klein said the ruling could damage the relationship between women and their physicians because women will not be given complete information.

"It really is forcing physicians to behave in a manner that's consistent with malpractice," she said. "If patients know we can't speak frankly, how can they trust the information we do give them?"

But Brough said Planned Parenthood already gives only part of the story.

"Studies have shown counselors at Planned Parenthood are so pro-abortion that they're not giving

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their patients all of the options anyway," she said.

Klein also said the ruling eventually could result in more cases of neglect and child abuse.

Brough said that according to a study done at Stanford University, child abuse has been on the increase since 1973, the year the *Roe vs. Wade* decision was made. According to the study, 80 percent of babies who end up being abused physically were planned, she said.

The ruling did not alter the 1973 decision, which legalized abortion.

The family planning program, enacted in 1970 by Congress as Title X of the Public Health Service Act, funds about 4,000 clinics nationwide serving more than 4 million low-income women each year.

The clinics always have been banned from using federal money to perform abortions, but until 1988, regulations let clinic staffs tell women about their abortion option and make referrals.

Court challenges had kept the regulations and the counseling ban from being enforced virtually everywhere. Now, the regulations can be enforced.