

■ Requirements for Ultrasound

BACKGROUND: Since the mid-1990s, several states have moved to make ultrasound part of abortion service provision. Some laws and policies require that a woman seeking an abortion receive information on accessing ultrasound services, while others require that a woman undergo an ultrasound before an abortion. Since routine ultrasound is not considered medically necessary as a component of first-trimester abortion, the requirements appear to be a veiled attempt to personify the fetus and dissuade a woman from obtaining an abortion. Moreover, an ultrasound can add significantly to the cost of the procedure.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 12 states require verbal counseling or written materials to include information on accessing ultrasound services.
- 25 states regulate the provision of ultrasound by abortion providers.
 - 3 states mandate that an abortion provider perform an ultrasound on each woman seeking an abortion and requires the provider to show and describe the image.
 - 10 states mandate that an abortion provider perform an ultrasound on each woman seeking an abortion, and require the provider to offer the woman the opportunity to view the image.
 - 9 states require that a woman be provided with the opportunity to view an ultrasound image if her provider performs the procedure as part of the preparation for an abortion.
 - 6 states require that a woman be provided with the opportunity to view an ultrasound image.



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ULTRASOUND REQUIREMENTS

STATE	INFORMATION ON ACCESSING ULTRASOUND SERVICES	PROVISION OF ULTRASOUND			
		Required for Each Abortion; The Provider Must Display and Describe the Image	Required for Each Abortion; The Provider Must Offer the Woman the Opportunity to View the Image	If Performed as Preparation for the Abortion, the Provider Must Offer the Woman the Opportunity to View the Image	Offered by the Provider to the Woman
Alabama			X		
Arizona			X [†]		
Arkansas				X	
Florida			X		
Georgia	Verbal			X	
Idaho				X	
Indiana	Verbal		X		X
Iowa					X
Kansas	Written		X		
Louisiana		X ^{*,§}			
Michigan	Written*			X	
Mississippi			X		
Missouri	Written				X
Nebraska	Verbal and written			X [†]	
North Carolina	Written	▼	X		
North Dakota					X [†]
Ohio			X [Ⓣ]	X	
Oklahoma	Verbal and written	▼	X		
South Carolina	Written			X	
South Dakota					X
Texas		X [§]			
Utah	Verbal			X ^Ω	X
Virginia	Written		X ^{‡,§}		
West Virginia				X	
Wisconsin	Verbal and written	X [§]			
TOTAL	12	3	10	9	6

▼ Enforcement permanently enjoined by court order; policy not in effect.

* Included in written counseling materials although not specifically mandated by state law.

Ω The woman will also be offered the option to hear a detailed description of the image.

† If an ultrasound is requested by the woman, the provider will also display the image so that the woman can view it.

‡ An ultrasound must take place at least 24 hours in advance of the abortion; in Texas and Virginia some women must obtain the ultrasound at least 24 hours in advance.

§ The law allows the woman look away from the image and in Louisiana, Texas and Virginia the woman may decline to listen to the description under certain circumstances. In Virginia and Wisconsin a woman who has been sexually assaulted is not required to undergo the ultrasound.

Ⓣ The provider must test for the fetal heartbeat which requires an ultrasound if the woman is in the first trimester of pregnancy which is when most abortions are provided.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For information on state legislative and policy activity, click on Guttmacher's [Monthly State Update](#), for state-level policy information see Guttmacher's [State Policies in Brief](#) series, and for information and data on reproductive health issues, go to Guttmacher's [State Center](#). To see state-specific reproductive health information go to Guttmacher's [Data Center](#), and for abortion specific information click on [State Facts About Abortion](#). To keep up with new state relevant data and analysis sign up for the [State News Quarterly Listserv](#).

Gold RB, [All that's old is new again: the long campaign to persuade women to forego abortion](#), *Guttmacher Policy Review*, 2009, 12(2):19–22.

Gold RB and Nash E, [State abortion counseling policies and the fundamental principles of informed consent](#), *Guttmacher Policy Review*, 2007, 10(4):6–13.