

## **James T. Roderick: Where to turn?**

### **When family planning is harder to find, the poor suffer**

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It is unfortunate that UT Southwestern Medical Center has decided to end its family-planning services because of newly implemented state legislation. Sadly, that is the case as laws and regulations are continually used to drive family-planning providers out of business.

Regardless of the political winds, Planned Parenthood of North Texas remains committed to providing this critical care. We have never closed a North Texas clinic – simply because the need for family-planning services continues to grow.

In Texas, only 30 percent of women who need family planning receive the care. And, no, family planning does not include abortion. Family planning is gynecological care, including breast and cervical cancer screenings, as well as birth control education and supplies to prevent pregnancy.

Family planning is the No. 1 way to prevent abortion. This is exactly why those who come to Planned Parenthood for abortion services are rarely family-planning patients with whom we have previously worked.

It isn't Planned Parenthood of North Texas that is suffering because of the recently implemented legislation; it's the thousands of uninsured mothers, wives and daughters who are suffering across the state. The thousands who cannot get preventive care and will be forced to turn to county emergency rooms with full-blown breast cancer. The thousands of men and women who have no idea they have contracted HIV and are passing the virus on to others. The thousands of couples struggling to feed and clothe their ever-increasing family because they can no longer find affordable contraception.

Our group, established in 1935, has been around long before government funds were allocated for family planning. In North Texas, we have grown from one clinic to a network of 28 and from serving a dozen patients to more than 82,000 women and men annually.

In 2002, hospitals ran 12 percent of publicly supported family-planning clinics in Texas; Planned Parenthood ran 18 percent. However, hospitals served only 14 percent of publicly supported clients while Planned Parenthood served 35 percent.

Nearly 20 years ago, John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth decided to stop providing indigent family-planning services and asked Planned Parenthood to take over. We are now the only provider of these services in Tarrant County.

Our growth is amazing when you consider that no other organization has had more obstacles and hoops to jump through than Planned Parenthood. We have prevailed over violent, misinformed protesters harassing our patients, prejudicial state legislation and rising health care costs.

And no other organization has been asked to "come in and take over" medical services more often than Planned Parenthood. When counties, cities and states decide they no longer want the burden of providing indigent family-planning services because of the cost, we step up to the task and succeed.