

# Feminist Majority Foundation's Emergency Contraception Campaign

## *Pharmacy Access for EC*

Currently, the FDA has delayed its decision on its approval of Emergency Contraception (EC) for over-the-counter use in women over the age of 16 until September 1, 2005. For the large population of people in this country who are uninsured, particularly young people and minorities (with up to 25% of women in these populations lacking insurance<sup>1</sup>), access to EC over-the-counter is crucial to their access to EC in general. Certain states (Washington, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico, and New Hampshire) have Pharmacy Access Programs that allow pharmacists to dispense EC without requiring a prescription. However, even when states have a Pharmacy Access Program, there is no mandate that pharmacies participate and many pharmacies require a prescription for EC or they don't dispense it at all. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, only 18% of pharmacies in California are providing EC directly to women through the state's Pharmacy Access program and only 9% of California women ages 15-44 are aware that you can get EC directly from certain pharmacists without a doctor's prescription.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROMOTE PHARMACY ACCESS:**

#### *Demand That Your Local Pharmacies Provide EC Without A Prescription*

- If you live in a "Pharmacy Access" state, your first step is to find out if the pharmacies close to your campus have a pharmacist who can provide EC without a doctor's prescription. Then carry out one or all of the following actions, or come up with your own!

#### *Flood your pharmacy with comment cards:*

- Collect suggestion/comment cards from pharmacies near campus, and table with them in high traffic areas. For pharmacies that don't provide EC without a prescription, have students fill out cards asking them to start. If the pharmacy has a pharmacist who provides EC directly, have students write messages of appreciation.

#### *Meet with your local pharmacy:*

- Your student group may want to target a particular pharmacy for this action. Pick one near the campus that is not part of a national chain that refuses to offer EC altogether (such as Wal-Mart) and try to set up a meeting with the pharmacist or pharmacy manager. Bring the suggestion cards you have collected or bring letters and petitions. Talk with them about the campus community's need for access to EC. Let the pharmacy know that if they start to offer EC directly, your group will publicize the information on your campus.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

## *Conscience Clauses*

In every state in this country there are pharmacies with official policies that allow each of its pharmacists to refuse to fill a prescription if dispensing that drug offends his/her own personal, moral, or religious beliefs. These “Conscience Clauses,” as they are commonly referred to, can restrict a woman’s access to full health services. They are particularly harmful to women seeking emergency contraception, which is effective only in the first 120 hours after unprotected sex and is most effective in the first 24 hours.

### **YOUR PHARMACY RIGHTS IN OBTAINING EC:**

- You have the right to be referred to another pharmacy/pharmacist if your prescription is refused.
- Your prescription belongs to you, and you have the right to have it returned to you.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO FIGHT CONSCIENCE CLAUSES:**

- Walk in, phone and/or send letters to pharmacies telling them that you demand pharmacists fill all prescriptions.
- Call attention to pharmacies that do not provide EC or who have conscious clauses.
- Highlight and support pharmacies, such as CVS, that guarantee they will fill all prescriptions.