

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Planned Parenthood to Expand Access to Emergency Contraception to 17-Year-Olds Teens**

Planned Parenthood Health Systems, Inc. will begin providing over-the-counter Plan B emergency contraception (EC) to 17-year-olds as soon as the regional health care organization receives word that it may legally do so. The FDA is expected to imminently announce that it would allow the sale of EC without a prescription to women as young as 17, making the post-coital contraceptive method available to minors for the first time without a doctor's order.

“As soon as the FDA indicates we are legally able to provide over-the-counter emergency contraception to 17-year-old patients we will begin doing so,” says David Nova, Vice President of Planned Parenthood Health Systems. “This public health issue has taken years to resolve and we will not delay access to care by one single day.”

In March, a federal district court issued a strongly worded ruling to that criticized the Bush Administration for its political, non-scientific handling of the requests that EC be available to all women without a prescription. Specifically, the court ruled that the FDA cannot prevent EC being sold over the counter to 17 year olds, effective within 30 days. The court further ruled that the FDA must reconsider whether minors under the age of 17 should be permitted to obtain EC over the counter.

“We applaud the FDA’s decision,” says Nova. “This is a common sense policy will help reduce the alarming rate of unintended pregnancies among teens and protect their health and safety.” The U.S. has the highest rate of teen pregnancy among the most developed countries in the world. Approximately 750,000 teens will become pregnant this year.

Studies show that teenagers use emergency contraception responsibly and don't rely on it as a regular method of birth control. Emergency contraception pills contain hormones that reduce the risk of pregnancy when started within 120 hours of unprotected intercourse. The sooner EC is administered, the better it works, making timely access critically important.

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Planned Parenthood Health Systems, Inc. is a private, nonprofit family planning agency that respects and protects the rights of each man and woman to make informed reproductive decisions. Our mission is to provide accessible, high-quality health care and information to clients and to serve as advocate and educator to the community on responsible human sexuality. We have offices in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia.