

## POLICY & PRACTICE

### Leavitt Defends Draft Reg in Blog

The debate over a draft federal regulation that would redefine abortion is being played out on the Internet. Recently, Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt addressed the issue on his blog (<http://secretarysblog.hhs.gov>), writing that if the department goes forward with the regulation, it will focus on protecting practitioner conscience and will not seek to expand the definition of abortion to include contraception. The controversy began in July when a draft of a proposed regulation became public. The

regulation, which is aimed at increasing protections for health care providers who object to performing abortions, would define abortion as the prescription or administration of a drug or procedure that "results in the termination of the life of a human being in utero between conception and natural birth, whether before or after implantation." Reproductive rights advocates railed against the document saying that the new wording would define some oral contraception, IUDs, and emergency contraception as abortion. In his blog, Mr. Leavitt said that the draft had made its way

into public circulation before he had a chance to review it. "It contained words that led some to conclude my intent is to deal with the subject of contraceptives, somehow defining them as abortion. Not true," he wrote in his blog. Planned Parenthood criticized Mr. Leavitt, saying that his comments were vague.

### South Dakota to Vote on Abortion

This November, voters in South Dakota once again will be faced with a choice about the regulation of abortion. On the ballot will be Measure 11, which would ban all abortions in the state except in cases in which the mother's life or health is at risk,

and in cases of rape or incest. Under the measure, anyone who performs an illegal abortion could be charged with a Class 4 felony, which has a penalty of up to 10 years in jail and a \$20,000 fine. In 2006, voters approved a ballot initiative that repealed a more restrictive abortion law. That law would have banned all abortions, except in cases in which the pregnancy threatened the woman's life. Supporters of this year's measure say that it has broader support because it includes "reasonable" exceptions to the ban. However, opponents blasted the ban and warned it could create a dangerous precedent for other states.

### Contraceptive Service Usage Rises

The proportion of women who received some type of contraceptive service from their health care provider rose significantly between 1995 and 2002, according to a recent analysis. About 41% of women reported receiving one or more contraceptive services in 2002, up from 38% in 1995 (*Am. J. Public Health* 2008 August [doi:10.2105/AJPH.2007.124719]). The findings are based on an analysis of the 1995 and 2002 National Survey of Family Growth. The analysis also showed significant increases in the proportions of women reporting specific contraception services, including birth control counseling (15% to 19%), receiving a birth control prescription or method (28% to 34%), and receiving a pregnancy test (16% to 20%).

### CDC: Twice as Many Men Adopt

Nearly twice as many men aged 18-44 years have ever adopted a child, compared with women in the same age group, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics. In 2002, about 2.3% of U.S. men aged 18-44 had ever adopted a child, compared with 1.1% of U.S. women. This is the first time that the CDC has reported national estimates on adoption by men and all women, not just married women. The data are based on the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth. Although the data don't reveal why more men have adopted children, the author speculated that it could be due in part to stepfathers who adopt their spouse's children. The report also found that men and women seem to have different motivations for adoption. For example, men who have already fathered a child and women who have not given birth were more likely to adopt than women who already had biological children and men who had never fathered a child. The report is available online at [www.cdc.gov/nchs](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs).

### Part D Premiums Slated to Go Up \$3

On average, Medicare beneficiaries can expect to pay about \$28 per month for standard Part D prescription drug coverage next year. The estimates from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are based on bids submitted for both prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage drug plans. The estimated monthly premiums are about \$3 higher than the average monthly premium costs this year, but are 37% lower than projections that were made when the Medicare prescription drug benefit was created in 2003. Open enrollment for the fourth year of the Medicare Part D program begins in November.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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