

FACT SHEET

How to Talk About Abortion & Reproductive Healthcare Access

Abortion is a topic that has a lot of mis- and disinformation circulating, whether it's about the medication, procedure, and what abortion is and isn't. A lot of this disinformation is purposely put out by right-wing extremists and parroted by Republicans to dissuade people from obtaining an abortion and to further drive a wedge among voters. This wedge helps them continue to pass abortion bans and restrictions, and it was part of their long-term strategy to whittle away at abortion access over the past five decades.

Here are some pointers for how to talk about abortion rights:

- **It's okay to say "abortion" in lieu of "reproductive rights," "right to choose," or "choice."** — Whether to obtain an abortion is a personal decision that is highly stigmatized, and straying away saying "abortion" risks further stigmatizing it. It's good to be clear about what rights we want to protect and expand. Language precision is important so that people don't think "abortion" is a dirty word. We want to firmly place the decision-making power in the pregnant person.
- **It's "Anti-Abortion," not "Pro-Life."** — This is another area where language precision is important. "Pro-life" as a moniker cedes the discussion to right-wing anti-abortion activists who would like to fashion themselves as protectors of human life while simultaneously disregarding the lives and health of pregnant people.
- **Abortion is healthcare, and it's a normal procedure.** — Despite right-wing disinformation on this, many people do not struggle with this decision and do not regret it afterwards.
- **Abortion is a safe procedure.** — Abortion is safer than giving birth, whether it's obtained via medication or in-clinic procedure. It is also safer than many other medical out-patient procedures or surgeries.
- **Birth control, including emergency contraception, does not induce abortion.** — Right-wing extremists have been trying to label certain birth control methods as an abortifacient for years, despite scientific fact to the contrary. Abortion terminates an existing embryo or fetus. Birth control, including all emergency contraceptives, prevent an embryo from forming, primarily by preventing fertilization of an egg.
- **Use gender-affirming language to discuss abortion rights and access.** - It's still okay to refer to "women" as a target of abortion bans, but it's important we keep our

nonbinary and transgender community mind. They are also impacted by abortion bans and often face greater stigma and barriers to obtain abortion care. It's also important to remember that gender-affirming care for transgender people is intimately tied to reproductive health and abortion rights. Many abortion clinics, including Planned Parenthood, provides gender-affirming care in addition to abortion care.

- **This will impact people of color, queer, and poor people the most.** — These communities make up most of the people who obtain an abortion in their lifetimes. It's important to remember this as we advocate for abortion rights and access for all impacted people in Virginia.
- **Late-term and third trimester abortions are legal. "Live birth" abortions aren't a thing, and infanticide is already illegal.** — During Governor Northam's administration, this became a familiar right-wing disinformation point. Later-term abortions are not and do not result in "live birth." Late-term abortions are often medically necessary for the woman's health, due to a fetal complication, or the result of restrictive abortion policies keeping the person from obtaining an abortion sooner, and in Virginia, these procedures are strictly limited to circumstances where the life or health of the pregnant parent would be severely impacted.
- **People still need access to abortion now and if/when Roe is overturned, so please do not stockpile Plan B and abortion medications.** — There are plenty of resources where you can direct people to access these medications should you know someone who wants abortion care. Stockpiling these resources only makes it difficult for people who need this option to get the care they need in time, especially since abortion will remain legal in Virginia barring future legislative action.
- **Refrain from using coat-hanger imagery and discussion.** — While people did resort to using coat hangers and other objects to induce abortion in the past, it isn't safe. Bringing up this imagery detracts from discussion about medication abortion, which is a safe way to self-induce an abortion that was not available when abortion was illegal pre-Roe. These stories suggest the idea to people who are in need of abortion care and aren't aware that safer methods exist. We don't want anyone to induce an abortion by physical trauma.