

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Vote no on Prop. 4

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Article Launched: 09/30/2008 10:30:33 AM PDT

THE APPEAL OF Proposition 4's requirement that parents be informed before their teenage daughter ends a pregnancy is understandable. It is a natural reaction for concerned and loving parents who want to know if their daughter is seeking an abortion.

But there are many teens who do not have a loving or any positive relationship with their parents. In some instances, parents are abusive.

With a mandatory parental notification, a pregnant teenager without caring parents could easily find herself in a situation where she might delay getting health care or even try to get a secret abortion by someone who is not qualified to perform one.

Fortunately, 70 percent of pregnant teens involve their parents in such decisions, according to researchers at UC San Francisco.

For those who fear coercion or abuse, Prop. 4 does allow for a waiver of the notification mandate. However, the teen would have to seek the waiver from a court, which could be a complicated and intimidating chore.

Perhaps if a teen could easily get a waiver from a guidance counselor, member of the clergy, or doctor, Prop. 4 might make more sense. But as it is, the waiver process is far too cumbersome and is not likely to be effective in protecting a pregnant teen from abuse.

Prop. 4 is an attempt to undo rights confirmed by the state Supreme Court that ruled parental notification is not needed in these cases; it's a privacy issue, which makes it different from required notification for medical procedures to a minor.

Most social workers who deal with teenage pregnancy are opposed to parental notification because of the negative impact it can have on the teen.

Prop. 4 is the third time a parental notification measure has been placed on the ballot. Similar ones were defeated in 2005 and 2006.

We opposed those measures and ask Californians to again reject mandatory parental notification by voting no on Prop. 4.

http://www.contracostatimes.com/opinion/ci_10592366?nlick_check=1