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Right of Conscience Regulation Dangerous Policy Regulation Should be Repealed by Incoming Obama Administration

Washington, DC---The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) strongly disagree with the outgoing Bush administration's decision to finalize a regulation establishing a "right of conscience" allowing medical staff to refuse to participate in any practice they object to on moral grounds, including abortion and possibly birth control and other health care as well. AAP and SAM call on the incoming Obama administration to repeal this regulation as soon as possible.

The regulation broadens the scope of existing federal refusal laws by allowing healthcare providers to withhold medical information based on their religious or moral beliefs. It also opens the door for hospitals and physicians to deny access to or information about contraception. The regulation will damage the integrity of the relationship between healthcare providers and patients, and will undermine the ability of adolescents and young women and families to make informed reproductive healthcare choices.

"This decision by the Bush Administration will threaten and restrict adolescents and women's access to reproductive health and birth control services. It is dangerous policy and it is unnecessary," says Dr. David Tayloe, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The regulation also expands existing law by extending the right to refuse health services to a broad range of healthcare workers who are not directly involved in patient care. Receptionists can refuse to schedule appointments; health insurance agents can refuse to process payments; and operating room staff can refuse to clean equipment based on religious objections to certain medical procedures or services. The new regulations will affect 580,000 hospitals, clinics, and other entities and cost \$44.5 million to enforce.

The impact that this will have on the millions of Americans who depend on federally funded healthcare services is enormous.

“By not providing a definition of abortion consistent with medical authority, the regulation leaves healthcare providers and institutions free to equate certain forms of contraception with abortion. Someone who objects to birth control could therefore take cover in this regulation. It is detrimental for young patients and the health of this country,” says Dr. Richard E. Kreipe, President of the Society of Adolescent Medicine.

AAP and SAM urge the incoming Obama administration to repeal this detrimental regulation.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

The Society for Adolescent Medicine, founded in 1968, is the only multidisciplinary professional health organization in the United States exclusively committed to improving the physical and psychological health and well-being of all adolescents through advocacy, clinical care, health promotion, health services delivery, professional development, and research.