

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**SESSION 2007**

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**SENATE DRS35240-LL-171A\* (02/28)**

Short Title: Compassionate Care/Victims of Sexual Assault. (Public)

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Sponsors: Senator Cowell.

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Referred to:

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A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO REQUIRE HOSPITALS AND URGENT CARE FACILITIES THAT  
PROVIDE EMERGENCY CARE TO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT TO  
OFFER EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION PILLS TO THOSE VICTIMS.

Whereas, it is estimated that from 25,000 to 32,000 women become pregnant each year as a result of rape or incest; and

Whereas, surveys have shown that many hospitals do not routinely offer emergency contraception to women seeking treatment after being sexually assaulted; and

Whereas, the risk of pregnancy after sexual assault has been estimated to be 4.7% in victims who were not protected by some form of contraception at the time of the attack; and

Whereas, the United States Food and Drug Administration has declared emergency contraception to be safe and effective in preventing unintended pregnancy and has approved over-the-counter access to the emergency contraceptive Plan B for women ages 18 and over; and

Whereas, emergency contraception can reduce the risk of pregnancy by as much as 89% if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex or primary contraceptive failure; and

Whereas, medical research strongly indicates that the sooner emergency contraception is administered, the greater the likelihood of preventing unintended pregnancy, and it is most effective if administered in the first 12 hours after unprotected intercourse; and

Whereas, in light of the safety and effectiveness of emergency contraceptive pills, both the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have endorsed more widespread availability of emergency contraceptives; and

1           Whereas, it is essential that all hospitals and urgent care facilities that provide  
2 emergency medical treatment also offer emergency contraception as a treatment option  
3 to any woman who has been sexually assaulted so that she may prevent an unintended  
4 pregnancy; Now, therefore,

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6           **SECTION 1.** Part 3A of Article 11 of Chapter 143B of the General Statutes  
7 is amended by adding a new section to read:

8 **"§ 143B-480.4. Emergency care for victims of sexual assault; definitions.**

9           (a) Every hospital and urgent care facility in this State that provides emergency  
10 care for victims of sexual assault shall as the standard of care do the following:

11           (1) Provide the sexual assault victim with medically and factually accurate  
12 and objective written and oral information about emergency  
13 contraception, including information explaining that:

14           a. Emergency contraception does not cause abortion, and

15           b. Emergency contraception is effective in most cases in  
16 preventing pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse.

17           (2) Provide the sexual assault victim with oral and written information  
18 about her option to be provided emergency contraception at the  
19 hospital or urgent care facility.

20           (3) Provide emergency contraception at the hospital or urgent care facility  
21 to each sexual assault victim who requests it, unless in the opinion of  
22 the attending physician or other health care provider, the emergency  
23 contraception is contraindicated for the patient.

24           A hospital or urgent care facility may not refuse to provide emergency contraception  
25 on the basis of the sexual assault victim's inability to pay for the emergency  
26 contraception.

27           (b) The provision of emergency contraceptive pills shall include the initial dose  
28 that the sexual assault victim can take at the hospital or urgent care facility as well as  
29 the additional or follow-up dose that the sexual assault victim may self-administer.

30           (c) Hospitals and urgent care facilities shall ensure that all personnel providing  
31 care to sexual assault victims are trained to provide medically and factually accurate and  
32 objective information about emergency contraception.

33           (d) The Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the  
34 Director of the Office of Women's Health, the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual  
35 Assault, and the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program, shall develop and produce, in  
36 quantities sufficient to comply with the purposes of this act, written information relating  
37 to emergency contraception for the prevention of pregnancy in sexual assault victims.

38           The information shall be clearly written and readily comprehensible in a culturally  
39 competent manner, as the Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration  
40 with the Director of the Office of Women's Health, the North Carolina Coalition  
41 Against Sexual Assault, and the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program, deems  
42 necessary to inform a sexual assault victim about emergency contraception. The  
43 information shall explain the nature of emergency contraception, the effectiveness of

1 emergency contraception in preventing pregnancy, where emergency contraception can  
2 be obtained, and treatment options.

3 (e) As provided in G.S. 143B-480.2(d), the hospital may be reimbursed in full for  
4 the cost of providing emergency contraception.

5 (f) With the exception of assistance authorized under subsection (g) of this  
6 section, assistance for expenses authorized under this section is to be paid directly to  
7 any hospital, ambulance service, attending physicians, or mental health professionals  
8 providing counseling, upon the filing of proper forms. Payment for the full  
9 out-of-pocket cost of the forensic medical examination shall be paid to the provider no  
10 later than 90 days after receiving the required written notification of the victim's  
11 expense.

12 (g) An individual may file a complaint with the Department alleging failure on  
13 the part of the hospital or urgent care facility to provide services required by this  
14 section. The Department shall immediately investigate the complaint to determine the  
15 action to be taken. If the Department finds that a hospital failed to provide the services  
16 required under this section, the Department shall:

17 (1) Issue a written warning to the hospital or urgent care facility that a  
18 complaint has been filed alleging that the hospital or urgent care  
19 facility is not providing the services required by this section.

20 (2) Based on the Department's findings, require the hospital to correct the  
21 deficiency leading to the complaint.

22 If after issuance of the written warning required by this section, the Department  
23 finds that the hospital or urgent care facility has failed to provide services, the  
24 Department shall, for the second and subsequent substantiated complaints, impose a  
25 penalty on the hospital or urgent care facility in the amount of one thousand dollars  
26 (\$1,000) per sexual assault victim who was denied services under this section. Penalties  
27 imposed under this section shall be paid to the Department and used by the Department  
28 only to defray a part of the costs for providing the information required by subsection  
29 (d) of this section.

30 The Department shall adopt rules for the investigation of complaints and imposition  
31 of penalties under this section. A hospital or urgent care facility may appeal the  
32 Department's finding pursuant to Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

33 (h) As used in this section, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

34 (1) "Emergency care" means medical examinations, procedures, and  
35 services provided by a hospital or urgent care facility to a sexual  
36 assault victim following an alleged sexual assault.

37 (2) "Emergency contraception" means a drug, drug regimen, or device that  
38 is:

39 a. Approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration  
40 to prevent pregnancy; and

41 b. Used postcoitally.

42 (3) "Medically and factually accurate and objective" means verified or  
43 supported by the weight of research conducted in compliance with  
44 accepted scientific methods and standards; published in peer-reviewed

1 journals; and recognized as accurate and objective by leading  
2 professional organizations and agencies with relevant expertise in the  
3 field of obstetrics and gynecology, such as the American College of  
4 Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

5 (4) "Sexual assault" means the crime of rape or any sexual offense that  
6 involves vaginal intercourse.

7 (5) "Sexual assault victim" means:

8 a. Any woman who arrives at the hospital or urgent care facility  
9 and alleges that she is the victim of sexual assault, or is  
10 accompanied by someone who alleges that she is the victim of  
11 sexual assault; and

12 b. Any woman who arrives at a hospital or urgent care facility  
13 who the agents of the hospital or urgent care facility personnel  
14 have reason to believe is a victim of sexual assault."

15 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2007.