



Department of Justice, Peace
and Human Development

Resources and Background on HHS Rule on Contraceptive Coverage

January 25, 2012

Quick Links

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Dear colleagues,

On January 20th, the Department of Health and Human Services issued a stunning and extremely disappointing final rule mandating that contraception and sterilization be included at no cost to the insured in all health care plans. The very narrow religious exemption was unchanged from the interim final rule, only offering a year of "grace" to comply.

This means that most Catholic ministries would be compelled to provide and pay for "services" (i.e., sterilization and contraception, including some abortifacients) that are a clear violation of Catholic teaching. It rests on the appalling notion that the federal government can tell religious ministries what is religious. In this case, it says that a ministry is not religious if it serves or employs people who are not members of that religious body. For us, it is precisely our faith that calls us to "serve the least of these" without regard for their religious affiliation. We serve the poor, the hungry, the sick, the homeless, and educate children "not because they are Catholic, but because we are." In short, the decision of the Administration is bad morality, bad policy and, for that matter, bad politics.

President of the USCCB, Cardinal-delegate Timothy Dolan commented "Never before has the federal government forced individuals and organizations to go out into the marketplace and buy a product that violates their conscience. This shouldn't happen in a land where free exercise of religion ranks first in the Bill of Rights."

The bishops along with Catholic partners including the Catholic Health Association, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic CharitiesUSA, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and other Catholic and religious allies, had vigorously argued against the mandate and encouraged a broader exemption that would include religious institutions and ministries.

The threat to our religious liberties is very real and challenging. The government should not be forcing us to choose between putting our faith into action and violating our consciences. Likewise the Administration's action poses real threats to the Church's capacity to offer adequate health care coverage for those who serve in our charitable and educational ministries in ways that reflect our teaching and moral principles. This decision tries to force us to choose between these two principles. The rule would go into effect for religious employers in August 2013 and employers' new policies would have to be implemented by January 2014. The purpose of the year is supposedly to allow us time to comply, but in fact we have a year to reverse, repeal or change this unjust mandate.

Included in this message are links to several statements, fact sheets and other materials that can assist you in helping to fix this injustice. For those of you who will be joining us for the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering next month, you will have the opportunity to make the case to Congress.

We appreciate all you do to defend human life and dignity, to protect religious liberty and Catholic identity. We ask you to join with us and others inside and outside our community

of faith to resist and reverse this appalling decision that threatens our freedom to serve those who need our help the most.

*John Carr
Executive Director
Justice, Peace and Human Development*

and

*Kathy A. Saile
Director of Domestic Social Development*

Links:

USCCB statement on HHS Rule: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-012.cfm>

Video of Cardinal-Designate Dolan, President of the USCCB, speaking about HHS rule: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-013.cfm>

Catholic Relief Services' statement on HHS rule: <http://newswire.crs.org/crs-objects-to-obama-administration-decision-to-require-catholic-institutions-to-offer-birth-control-to-employees/>

Catholic Charities USA's statement on HHS rule:

<http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/page.aspx?pid=2516>

Michael Sean Winter's Distinctly Catholic blog commenting on HHS Rule:

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/jaccuse>

Washington Post editorial on HHS rule:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/respecting-religious-exemptions/2012/01/22/gIQA0ZESJQ_story.html?hpid=z3

USCCB Comments filed on proposed HHS rule issued in August 2011:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/general-counsel/rulemaking/comments-proposed-hhs-regs-neonates-research-2001-08.cfm>

USCCB fact sheet on HHS rule: [Click here](#)

[Join our Action Network](#), and we'll send you updates on how you can speak out on important issues that impact human life and dignity.

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