

# Federal funding allows students free birth control

■ Students are now eligible for free family planning services through the University Health Center, including contraceptives, STD screening and pregnancy testing

By Kristina Johnson  
Oregon Daily Emerald

For struggling students, piecing together pocket change for the next package of Top Ramen is hard enough — forget about the next package of birth control pills.

"It's really sad when somebody has to choose between the pill and groceries," said Diane Duke, associate executive director of the local Planned Parenthood.

The University Health Center has teamed up with Planned Parenthood to remedy this problem.

The health center started offering free family planning services in July to students as part of the federally funded Family Planning Expansion Project, a five-year Medicaid pilot project aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy.

The health center administration became interested in the project earlier this year when they noticed that birth control prescriptions in their pharmacy were dropping.

"We were losing students to Planned Parenthood," Health Center business manager Daralyn DeHaven-Murdoch said.

The local chapter of Planned Parenthood, in its second year of funding through FPEP, was providing what the health center couldn't — free contraceptives, STD screening and pregnancy tests.

In January, Planned Parenthood agreed to let the health center "piggyback" on its FPEP funding, in part because it was overwhelmed with new clients from the program. According to Duke, Planned Parenthood's client base shot up by 70 per-

cent in the first year of the FPEP program and has continued to swell.

"We're swamped," Duke said. "We've had to extend our hours to evenings and Saturdays because of this program."

Duke estimates that one out of 10 visits to the Planned Parenthood

clinic is from students. She said she hopes Planned Parenthood's burden will shrink now that the health center is providing free services.

"We're hoping that students will go there," she said, pointing out that the location is more convenient. "And that's their health care provider. If I go in [to the health center] for a sore throat, it's a one-stop shop. I can walk out the door with 12 cycles of pills."

DeHaven-Murdoch agreed. "A lot of students have a rapport with practitioners here," she said. "They want to get all of their health care in the same place. If we lost students to Planned Parenthood, we're hoping we'll get them back now."

She said the health center has already seen 275 eligible students since the program started in July, and they're gearing up for the swarm of returning students in the fall.

At least 25 of the students they've seen have been men, and she says she hopes they will see more.

"A lot of programs are focused on women, but this program focuses on men as well," she said. "They can come in and have STD screenings, get free condoms or talk about contraceptive management."

Dr. Gerald Fleischli, medical director of the University Health Center, said the FPEP program started partly in reaction to the Clinton administration's failure to pass universal health care legislation. The government has tried to compensate for the failure, he said, by addressing "certain targeted needs which they see as priorities," including vaccines for children and family planning.

Before receiving funding from FPEP, clinics like Planned Parenthood operated on a sliding scale in which a client's fee was determined by his or her income, Duke said. She said even a modest fee deterred



Tom Patterson for the Emerald  
Diane Duke, associate executive director of the local Planned Parenthood, said students should not have to make 'either-or' decisions when it comes to family planning.

some people.

"The thing about FPEP is that before, even in student health centers, the pill wasn't completely free," she said. "When you take the barrier of cost away, no matter how low ... people are more likely to come in. This one is easy because it's self-reported income. It's for people at 180 percent of the poverty rate and below."

In Oregon, this translates into an income of up to \$1300 a month for an unmarried person. Duke said the idea is to catch people who don't qualify for the Oregon Health Plan but can't afford private health insurance. Students covered by their parents' health insurance can still qualify, however. The application waives requirements for students who don't want their visits to show up on their parents' insurance statements.

"Our goal," Duke said, "is to offer family planning to as many people as possible."

Duke said so far FPEP clients are happy with the program — especially women, who she said pay an average of 68 percent of the costs of birth control.

"We tell people their contraceptives are free, and they're thrilled," she said. "It's like Christmas."

The University Health Center is located at 13th Avenue and Agate Street. Women's clinic appointments can be made for Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:50 p.m., and for Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. General clinic appointments are available the same times — additional times are also available Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. No appointment is necessary on Saturday for a general clinic visit.

Urgent care is available at the health center every day until 6 p.m., beginning at 9 a.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. Sunday, with an 8 a.m. start time the rest of the week.

## Family Planning Expansion Project at the Health Center

### Free services

annual women's gynecological exam

pregnancy tests

pap smear follow-up

screening for urinary and reproductive tract infections, including STDs

contraceptive counseling visits

### Free contraceptives available

oral contraceptives (the pill)

Depo Provera

Norplant

male & female condoms

vaginal spermicides

emergency contraceptives (the "morning after" pill)

cervical cap

diaphragm

IUD

For more information or to apply for FPEP, contact the University Health Center at 346-4441 or visit [www.healthcenter.uoregon.edu](http://www.healthcenter.uoregon.edu).

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