

The outgoing Bush administration is planning to announce a broad new "right of conscience" rule permitting medical facilities, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare workers to refuse to participate in any procedure they find morally objectionable, including abortion and possibly even artificial insemination and birth control.

For more than 30 years, federal law has dictated that doctors and nurses may refuse to perform abortions. The new rule would go further by making clear that healthcare workers also may refuse to provide information or advice to patients who might want an abortion.

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