

Medication abortion care delivered through telehealth has become an increasingly important part of reproductive healthcare in the United States, including for Wisconsinites. As abortion bans, restrictions, and logistical barriers persist, many patients are turning to out-of-state clinicians who provide such care under shield laws.

### What shield laws do – and why they matter

Shield laws were enacted in [several states](#) after the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 *Dobbs* decision overturned the federal right to abortion. They offer legal protection to clinicians who provide abortion care via telehealth to patients in states with abortion bans or telehealth restrictions. These protections **enable out-of-state clinicians to mail medication abortion pills to patients in states with restrictions or bans**.

Research shows that telehealth is a safe and effective model for providing medication abortion.<sup>1-3</sup> Shield laws allow patients to access that care even when in-state providers cannot offer it.

### Wisconsin law prohibits abortion via telehealth, but shield laws provide an alternative way to access that care

In Wisconsin, [state law](#) goes against scientific evidence and prohibits clinicians from using telehealth to provide medication abortion within the state's formal healthcare system. This telehealth ban works in tandem with other Wisconsin restrictions to make it very difficult to access medication abortion through formal channels in Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup>

However, Wisconsinites can and do obtain telehealth medication abortion from out-of-state clinicians who are protected by shield laws.

### Thousands in Wisconsin rely on shield laws to access telehealth medication abortion

Research suggests that thousands of Wisconsinites have obtained medication abortion pills via telehealth from out-of-state shield-law providers since the *Dobbs* decision.

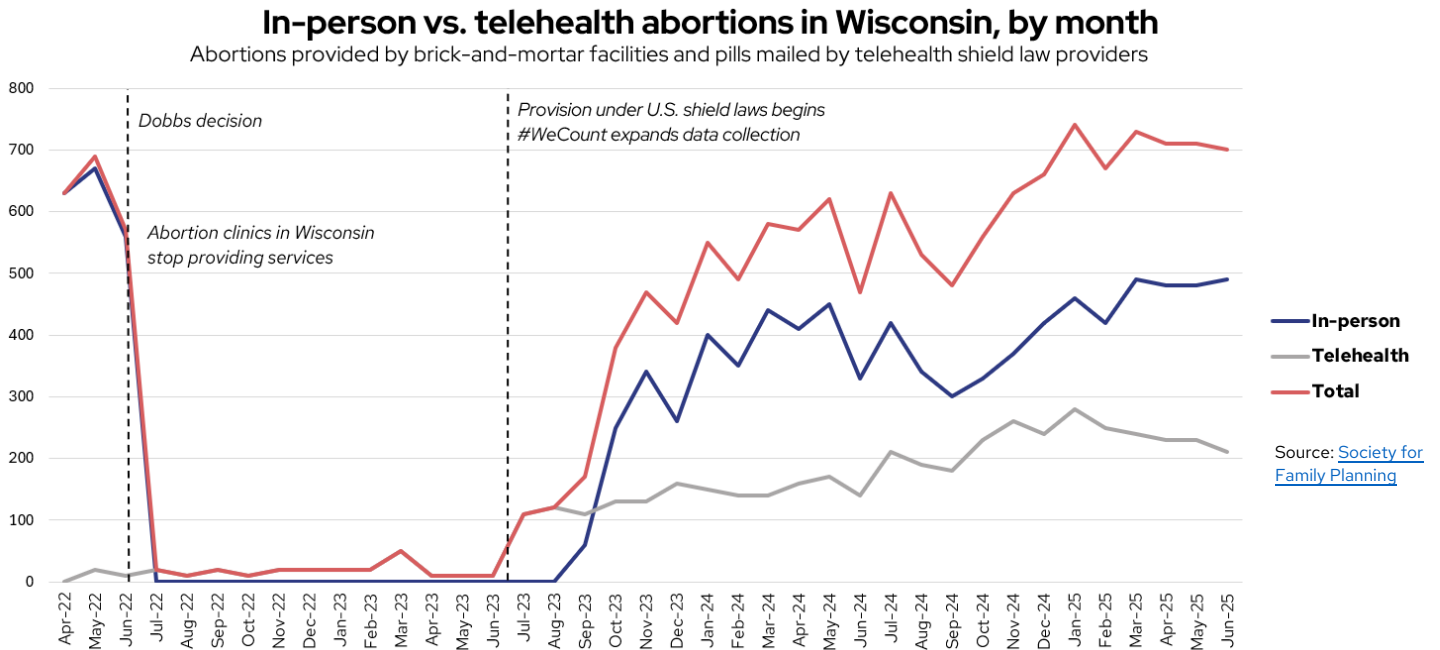
The [#WeCount](#) study documents that from July 2023 (the first month for which shield law data are available) through June 2025, Wisconsinites placed an **average of 184 medication abortion pill orders per month** through shield law providers.

These are counts of medication ordered, not medication taken, and the actual number of completed abortions is likely fewer than this. Nonetheless, the **high level of demand** suggests that telehealth has become a crucial pathway for Wisconsinites in need of abortion care.

In-person abortion care – that is, both procedural and medication abortions provided at brick-and-mortar facilities – still accounts for most abortions in Wisconsin. But telehealth makes up a substantial and growing

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share. Since the summer of 2024, about **one-third of abortions in Wisconsin have been provided by telehealth shield law providers.**



## Why people choose telehealth abortion care

Patients turn to shield law telehealth services for many reasons:

- **Distance and transportation barriers:** For rural residents or anyone without reliable transportation, getting to a clinic can be difficult or impossible. Medication abortion pills delivered by mail can help overcome these barriers.
- **Out-of-pocket costs:** Federal and [state law](#) prohibits many insurance plans, including Medicaid, from covering abortion care. Many people struggle to raise out-of-pocket funds for in-person abortion care and its associated transportation, lodging, and childcare [costs](#).<sup>5</sup> Telehealth providers offer comparatively affordable options.
- **Privacy, comfort, and other personal reasons:** Research tells us that many people prefer telehealth medication abortion care to in-person care for a variety of personal reasons, including privacy, comfort, and concern about judgement from others.<sup>6,7,8</sup> Prior discrimination in the healthcare system may also lead people to choose telehealth medication abortion.<sup>9</sup>

## Various abortion care pathways must remain accessible

People need a variety of ways to access abortion care, which is an [essential healthcare service](#) and a fundamental component of reproductive autonomy. Evidence indicates that telehealth abortion care, enabled by shield laws, has become a fundamental access point for many Wisconsinites – especially in light of our [state’s multiple restrictions](#) that make in-person care difficult to access.

## References

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