

Thesis: Publicly Funded Family Planning in Arizona, 1940-2017

Editor's note:

Claudia Nunez-Eddy defended her thesis titled "Publicly Funded Family Planning in Arizona, 1940-2017," in May 2018 in front of committee members Jane Maienschein, James Hurlbut, and Erica O'Neil, earning her a Master of Science degree. <https://repository.asu.edu/items/49009>

Abstract:

Nearly seven decades ago, the US government established grants to the states for family planning and acknowledged the importance of enabling all women to plan and space their pregnancies, regardless of personal income. Since then, publicly-funded family planning services have empowered millions of women, men, and adolescents to achieve their childbearing goals. Despite the recognized importance of subsidized family planning, services remain funded in a piecemeal fashion.

Since the 1940s there have been numerous federal funding sources for family planning, including the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Program, Office of Economic Opportunity grants, Title XX Social Services Program, Title X Family Planning Program, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, alongside state and local support. Spending guidelines allow states varying degrees of flexibility regarding allocation, to best serve the local population. With nearly two billion dollars spent annually on subsidized family planning, criticism often arises surrounding effective local program spending and state politics influencing grant allocation.

Political tension regarding the amount of control states should have in managing federal funding is exacerbated in the context of family planning, which has become increasingly controversial among social conservatives in the twenty-first century. This thesis examines how Arizona's political, geographic, cultural, and ethnic landscape shaped the state management of federal family planning funding since the early twentieth century. Using an extensive literature review, archival research, and oral history interviews, this thesis demonstrates the unique way Arizona state agencies and non-profits collaborated to maximize the use of federal family planning grants, effectively reaching the most residents possible. That partnership allowed Arizona providers to reduce geographic barriers to family planning in a rural, frontier state.

The social and political history surrounding the use of federal family planning funds in Arizona demonstrates the important role states have in efficient, effective, and equitable state implementation of national resources in successfully reaching local populations. The contextualization of government funding of family planning provides insight into recent attempts to defund abortion providers like Planned Parenthood, cut the Title X Family Planning Program, and restructure Medicaid in the twenty-first century.