

WASHINGTON—National Health Law Program executive director Emily Spitzer issued the following statement celebrating today's ruling by a federal judge that emergency contraception be made available over-the-counter without any age restriction:

“For a case that has been highly politicized and drawn out, today's decision is welcome to the many women, including many young women, who will need emergency contraception at some point in their lives. Health advocates, leading medical professionals and others have consistently demonstrated that the science squarely backs up the drive to make sure that all women, including young adults and teens, have the ability to make individual decisions to prevent pregnancy. Removing the age restriction knocks down another access barrier to exercising their health options.

As documented in our [Health Care Refusals report](#), emergency contraception is basic medical care. Greater access to emergency contraception is good medical practice, supported by sound science and good for public health.

Secretary Kathleen Sebelius overrode the FDA and decided, despite the evidence, that emergency contraception, including Plan B One-Step, would only be available without a prescription to those 17 and older. Additional barriers included requiring the drug to be held behind the pharmacy counter so proof of age could be presented before purchase, and requiring a prescription for persons 16 and younger. Today's ruling lifts the age and prescription barriers.

NHeLP recognizes that additional barriers remain. Low-income women on Medicaid still must have a prescription regardless of age, or pay out of pocket, which costs an average of \$50.00. As Judge Edward R. Korman noted in his [ruling](#), these barriers particularly hurt low-income women: ‘Unfortunately, this risk [of unintended pregnancy] is especially great for young women and low-income women, two groups that could significantly benefit from timely access to and use of the product.’

NHeLP looks forward to working with the Administration to make over-the-counter access to emergency contraception a reality for all women, and to ensure that they have the opportunity and means to make their own personal health care decisions.”

