Abortion booklets prepared

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A 20-page booklet about pregnancy and abortion and a 95-page directory of agencies that can help mothers and pregnant women went out Friday to physicians and abortion clinics around Louisiana.

The booklets are needed for a new state law. The law requires that a woman seeking an abortion be given details on the procedure, the development of the child, the risks and other information at least 24 hours before the operation.

Boxes of the two pamphlets and a new form that must be used whenever a woman requests an abortion were brought to the 14 abortion clinics, said Carolyn Maggio, head of the state task force that developed the material.

"We personally delivered those in boxes," she said.

In addition, the task force was mailing the material to 3,600 doctors, hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers, she said. The doctors included not only obstetricians and gynecologists but family practitioners, general practitioners and internists.

A letter sent earlier tells everyone on the mailing list to call their regional health department offices if they do not get the booklets by Sept. 21, Ms. Maggio said.

The law takes effect Sept. 25.

It was enacted during the last legislative session, but its enforcement was delayed because the information about informed consent was not available.

"The biggest problem was getting this printed and mailed out in such a short time frame. The task force first met July 27," Ms. Maggio said.

in addition to putting the words together, some of them courtesy of similar pamphlets put out by the Pennsylvania and Ohio health departments, the group had to find illustrations. Some were available locally, but the task force wound up calling Lennart Nilsson in Sweden to get permission to use photographs from his book "A Child is Born" for others.

About half of the booklet is photographs and brief descriptions of the various stages of development from the second week, when the embryo is about one-hundredth of an inch long, until the 38th week, when it is ready to be born.

The rest describes methods of and alternatives to abortion, and the risks associated with the various types of abortion. It notes that federal data indicates that the risk of dying from a legal abortion is less than one per 100,000.

The parish-by-parish directory lists not only adoption services, but federal, state and local government agencies that can help mothers, from the Medicaid program to the Office of Mental Health.

District attorneys are listed, too, since state law requires fathers to support their children.

The law also requires the Department of Health and Human Services to maintain a toll-free hotline that anyone may call to get a copy of the information. Its number: 1-800-578-3032.

The Advertiser
Saturday Sept. 16, 1995
Section A, Column 1