



MIKE DEWINE

★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★

Charitable Law Section
Office 614-466-3181
Fax 614-466-9788

150 E Gay St, 23rd Fl
Columbus, Ohio 43215
www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov

Planned Parenthood Investigation Summary Regarding Disposal of Aborted Fetuses

The Charitable Law Section team assigned to investigate the Planned Parenthood organizations sent Records Requests to the following entities: (1) each of the three Planned Parenthood regions in Ohio that contain an abortion clinic: Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio, Planned Parenthood Greater Ohio, and Planned Parenthood Northeast Ohio; (2) two biological waste disposal companies – Stericycle, Inc. and Accu-Medical Waste Company – identified by the Planned Parenthood organizations as the facilities used to dispose of aborted fetuses; (3) four financial institutions: Key Bank, PNC Bank, Huntington Bank, and Chase Bank – where Planned Parenthood conducts its respective banking; and (4) DNA Diagnostics Center and LabCorp, Inc. – two Ohio companies that either conducted or possibly conducted testing on fetuses or fetal tissue obtained from abortion procedures. With the exception of LabCorp, Inc., each of these organizations responded to our Records Requests and those responses produced in excess of 66,000 pages of documents, all of which were individually examined by team members.

The investigation proceeded essentially along two separate tracks – one focusing on the disposal of aborted fetuses, the other examining Planned Parenthood’s financial transactions – to determine whether any of its Ohio-based facilities engaged in the sale or donation of fetuses or fetal tissue to research companies.

According to publicly available Ohio Department of Health records, 21,186 abortions were performed in 2014 and 23,216 were performed in 2013. It became readily apparent following the receipt of the Planned Parenthood responses that there was no means by which the team could account for the fetuses comprising those totals. Instead, the waste company records showed little more than the number of containers collected, the weight or volume of the containers, the collection location, the final destination for the containers, and the disposal method for the biological materials. The investigation would have undoubtedly benefited from a legal requirement mandating that providers of abortion services document the disposition of each and every fetus taken as a result of an abortion procedure. Absent such a requirement, the team was unable to conclude with certainty that no Planned Parenthood organization engages in transaction of fetuses or fetal tissue.

The amount of documents produced as a result of the Records Request gave no indication of any sort of fetal tissue transactions. During the course of our investigation, however, we learned that aborted fetuses are ultimately disposed of in a landfill. We spoke personally with Accu-Medical Waste’s Vice-President, Doug Parks, regarding his company’s acceptance of aborted fetuses for disposal. He explained that his company auto-claves the biological waste – including the aborted fetuses. The autoclave procedure involves steam cooking the biological waste to kill off any infectious materials. Mr. Parks further explained that his company ultimately disposes of the treated biological waste, including the aborted fetuses, at a landfill in the State of Kentucky. Accu-Medical Waste services Planned Parenthood facilities in Central and Southwest Ohio.



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Another issue of some importance resulting from this investigation centered on Planned Parenthood Northeast Ohio's disposition of fetuses following abortion procedures. The three Planned Parenthood organizations – Southwest Ohio, Greater Ohio, and Northeast Ohio – use two biological waste disposal companies: Stericycle, Inc. and Accu-Medical Waste Company. Early in the investigation, it was noticed that the Stericycle contracts contain a provision in its Regulated Medical Waste Acceptance Policy that specifically states it cannot accept human remains including fetuses. It was further noticed that the Planned Parenthood-Northeast Ohio records show that since April, 2014, it has used only Stericycle to dispose of its biological waste (including aborted fetuses) despite that contract language. I contacted Planned Parenthood's counsel to confirm that Planned Parenthood-Northeast Ohio uses only Stericycle to dispose of its aborted fetuses and they indeed confirmed that fact. I then contacted an official from Stericycle, Selin Hoboy, Vice-President of Legislative And Regulatory Affairs, who confirmed that Stericycle, per the contract language, does not accept fetuses and that there are no Planned Parenthood organizations excepted from that prohibition.