

STATE LEGAL SNAPSHOT

Iowa

Abortion law, status, and enforcement — one-page reference

As of Jul 12, 2026

Research completed Jul 12, 2026

Confidence: high



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Abortion is banned after 6 weeks (last menstrual period) — availability: severely restricted.

GESTATIONAL LIMIT	6 weeks	AVAILABLE	Severely restricted	✓ MOTHER EXEMPT	Yes	FETAL HOMICIDE LAW	Yes	PERSONHOOD LANGUAGE	Yes
TELEHEALTH	Not allowed	WAITING PERIOD	24 hours	✓ RAPE / INCEST EXCEPTION	Yes	PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	Notification only		
SHIELD STATE	No	MEDICAID	Hyde only	CIVIL BOUNTY LAW	No	PENDING CHANGE	See below		

§ Jurisdiction overview

Iowa bans most abortions once cardiac activity is detectable (~6 weeks LMP), with exceptions for medical emergency, rape, incest, and fatal fetal anomaly.

Iowa Code § 146E.2(2)(a) (2026) · Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Inc. v. Reynolds ex rel. State, No. 23-1145 (Iowa June 28, 2024)

☒ Fetal personhood & the internal contradiction

Iowa's legal treatment of fetal personhood is internally contradictory. The abortion chapters (146A, 146B, 146C, 146E) define 'unborn child' as 'an individual organism of the species homo sapiens from fertilization to live birth' — language that strongly suggests the fetus is an individual human being with a distinct legal identity from the moment of conception. The fetal homicide statute (§ 707.8) protects a 'human pregnancy' from fertilization onward, treating third-party termination as a crime equivalent to homicide (Class B or C felony).

Iowa Code § 707.8(12) · Iowa Code § 146A.1(6)(b)

MINORS

A physician must notify one parent or legal guardian at least 48 hours before performing an abortion on a minor; the minor may seek a judicial bypass, or notification may be made to a grandparent in certain circumstances.

SPOUSAL / PATERNAL RIGHTS

Iowa has no statute requiring a husband's consent or notification, or the biological father's consent or notification, before an abortion.

☒ Penalties in effect

ACTOR	OFFENSE	PENALTY
Physician — violation of chapter 146E (heartbeat law)	Performing abortion after detection of fetal heartbeat without applicable exception	License discipline under § 148.6 (civil penalty up to \$10,000, suspension, or revocation); no direct criminal penalty
Physician — violation of chapter 146B (20-week post-fertilization ban)	Performing abortion at 20+ weeks post-fertilization without medical emergency or to preserve unborn child's life	License discipline under § 148.6; civil liability for actual damages to the woman; injunctive relief enforceable by woman, parents, health care providers, county attorney, or attorney general
Any person — partial-birth abortion (D&X)	Knowingly performing or attempting a partial-birth abortion (not limited to physicians)	Class C felony: up to 10 years imprisonment, \$1,370-\$13,660 fine; civil liability for statutory damages (3x cost) and compensatory damages to mother, father, or maternal grandparents
Non-physician — feticide (§ 707.7)	Intentionally terminating a human pregnancy with the pregnant person's consent, by a person not licensed under chapter 148	Class C felony: up to 10 years imprisonment, \$1,370-\$13,660 fine
Attending physician — third-party nonconsensual termination (§ 707.8)	Causing death of or serious injury to a human pregnancy without the pregnant person's consent (not applicable to lawful medical procedures)	Class B felony (during forcible felony, up to 25 years), Class C felony (intentional or during other felony, up to 10 years), Class D felony (attempt), aggravated misdemeanor, or serious misdemeanor, depending on circumstances

Recent changes

- Jul 2026** HF 2788 takes effect: Iowa now requires in-person physician examination, in-person dispensing of abortion-inducing drugs in a health care setting, and new complication-reporting requirements.
- May 2026** Governor Reynolds signed HF 2788 into law, restricting medication abortion access; law takes effect July 1, 2026.
- May 2026** Iowa House passed HF 2788 restricting abortion medication: requiring in-person prescribing and dispensing, informed consent, and complication reporting.
- Jul 2024** Iowa's fetal heartbeat law (chapter 146E) took effect, banning most abortions after detection of cardiac activity (~6 weeks LMP).
- Jun 2024** Iowa Supreme Court (4-3) reversed the temporary injunction against chapter 146E, holding that abortion restrictions are subject to rational basis review and the heartbeat law satisfies that standard.
- Feb 2024** Iowa Board of Medicine adopted rule 653-13.17 establishing standards of practice for physicians performing abortions, including ultrasound methodology, documentation of exceptions, and discipline standards.
- Jul 2023** Governor Reynolds signed the new fetal heartbeat law (chapter 146E); Planned Parenthood filed suit the same day and obtained a temporary injunction from the Polk County District Court on July 17, 2023.

Pending changes to watch

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Inc. v. Reynolds ex rel. State, No. 23-1145 (remand proceedings)

Litigation · On remand to Polk County District Court after Iowa Supreme Court dissolved temporary injunction.

If the district court (or Iowa Supreme Court on further appeal) rules that chapter 146E violates the inalienable rights or equal protection clauses, the heartbeat law could be struck down on state constitutional grounds, restoring the pre-ban 20-week post-fertilization limit as the primary restriction.

HF 453 / fetal personhood bills (2025-2026 session)

Legislation · Introduced in the 2025-2026 legislative session; would recognize unborn children as persons for purposes of wrongful death and expand homicide/assault statutes.

If enacted, would expand Iowa's wrongful death statute to include unborn children and strengthen fetal-personhood language in homicide statutes, potentially creating additional civil and criminal liability for acts that harm a pregnancy.

Federal mifepristone litigation (FDA v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine / State of Louisiana v. FDA)

Litigation · Federal appellate litigation over FDA's regulation of mifepristone, including in-person dispensing requirements and mail-order distribution.

Depending on federal court rulings, a nationwide in-person dispensing requirement for mifepristone could be reinstated, effectively closing the mail-order pathway that currently allows Iowans to receive pills from out-of-state shield-law providers.

Key authorities

Iowa Fetal Heartbeat Law (chapter 146E) Iowa Code ch. 146E, enacted 2023 Acts, 1st Ex., ch. 1

The operative ban: prohibits abortion once a fetal heartbeat is detected (~6 weeks LMP), with exceptions for medical emergency, rape, incest, miscarriage, and fatal fetal anomaly.

Iowa 20-Week Post-Fertilization Ban (chapter 146B) Iowa Code ch. 146B

Backstop prohibition at 20 weeks post-fertilization (~22 weeks LMP); provides narrower exceptions and includes civil enforcement by county attorneys and the attorney general.

Iowa Abortion Prerequisites — Informed Consent (chapter 146A) Iowa Code ch. 146A

Mandates 24-hour waiting period, ultrasound, state-scripted counseling, and (since 2026) in-person examination and coercion screening before any abortion.

Iowa Medication Abortion Restrictions (chapter 146F, HF 2788) Iowa Code ch. 146F, enacted by HF 2788 (2026)

Requires in-person dispensing of abortion-inducing drugs in a health care setting; bans telehealth and mail-order; creates civil liability and complication-reporting requirements.

Iowa Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Iowa Code § 707.8A

Class C felony ban on D&X procedure; authorizes civil actions by mother, father, and maternal grandparents.

Generated from the structured legal focused deep-research record for IA (research completed 2026-07-12). This snapshot condenses a much larger sourced dataset — full citations, quoted statutory text, and plain-language explanations are in the full Iowa survey. This document has not been reviewed by a lawyer and should not be used as legal advice.