

# Mexico City to allow legal abortions

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MEXICO CITY --

A new measure legalizing abortions in Mexico City was published into law on Thursday, allowing doctors to almost immediately begin terminating pregnancies in their first trimester.

City Health Secretary Manuel Mondragon said early term abortions will be legal starting Friday for women who are nearing the 12-week limit and cannot wait. Women whose pregnancies are less advanced must wait until the law's regulations are published. Authorities have 60 days to publish them, but are expected to do it next week.

He also said that except in cases of medical emergency, women will have to prove residency in the capital, a city of 9 million - addressing the widespread belief that the law would make the capital a magnet for women across Mexico seeking abortions. Girls under 18 would need parental consent.

The law also allows gynecologists with moral objections to refuse to perform abortions.

The procedure will be free and available at 14 of the 28 city hospitals. Mondragon said each facility will be able to carry out seven abortions a day. Officials said it was not immediately clear if private hospitals would have to offer the abortions.

The country's leading anti-abortion group has said it may block entry to clinics performing abortions and to publicly identify abortion doctors. President Felipe Calderon's conservative National Action Party also plans to challenge the new law before the Supreme Court, which could suspend its practice until a ruling is issued.

The law, backed by Mexico City's leftist government, is historic in a region with a heavy Roman Catholic majority.

In all of Latin America and the Caribbean, only Cuba and Guyana permit legal abortions, and the rest of Mexico allows it only in cases of rape, severe birth defects or if the mother's life is at risk.

Under the Mexico City law, women receiving an abortion after 12 weeks would be punished by three to six months in jail, and anyone performing an abortion after the first trimester would face one to three years in jail.