

complications of death increase as you move through the abortion or the pregnancy trimesters and when the procedure is delayed past the eighth week of pregnancy, risks take a jump. At all times, it remains safer than child birth but it, as a procedure, does increase in risk after the eighth week. Abortions performed at 11 or 12 weeks of pregnancies are three times more dangerous for the woman than abortions performed at or before eight weeks. What we need to do is make sure that whatever we have is a system which is going to, in the event abortions are legal, allow for this to occur at the safest period. It is important for women who are considering abortion to obtain prompt medical attention. One of the things we are going to want to think about is obtaining prompt medical attention for women. Policies need to be devised which facilitate, rather than inhibit, medical procedures, medical support, financial support, and the like, the kinds of things that a commission could talk about. Before abortion was legalized, women often postponed having abortions beyond, and frequently far beyond the first trimester. They often had to search secretly for a person who would perform abortion, decide whether to subject themselves to an unlicensed and potentially dangerous practitioner, raise large sums of money and travel great distances. Whether or not abortion is legal in this state, that risk will continue to exist. The only way to surmount those kinds of risks is to create a commission designed to end for women the kinds of risks that bring them to this pass, whether it is legal or illegal. Access to legal abortion has greatly reduced such delays, and from 1972 to 1981, the percentage of abortions performed after the first trimester has dropped significantly. Only 10 percent now are done after the first trimester. In 1973, only 38 percent of abortions were obtained at eight weeks or earlier. Today, over 50 percent are obtained at the earliest and safest stage. The first major study of issues of the health impact of legal abortions was released by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in 1975. The Academy concluded that many women will seek to terminate an unwanted pregnancy by abortion, whether it is legal or not. Evidence suggests that legislation and practices that permit women to obtain abortions in proper medical surroundings will lead to fewer deaths and a lower rate of medical complications than restrictive legislation and practices. The substantial differences between the mortality and morbidity associated with legal abortion in the first and second trimester suggests that laws, medical practices, and educational programs should enable and encourage women who have chosen this route to obtain it in the first three