

Understanding Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice An NCJW Primer

For the past 125 years, NCJW has worked to advance reproductive rights in the United States with the belief that everyone has the right to control their fertility through unfettered access to birth control, abortion, and comprehensive sex education. While we continue this important work today, we also recognize that this advocacy approach has limited our ability to truly understand the ways in which reproductive rights do not apply universally to everyone. As such, we strive to pursue an advocacy framework that recognizes how reproductive rights apply to different communities based on a myriad of factors. The following primer attempts to identify and clarify three key reproductive advocacy frameworks and how each help us to achieve reproductive freedom and liberation for all.

Framework Name	<i>Reproductive Health</i>	<i>Reproductive Rights</i>	<i>Reproductive Justice</i>
Framework Concept	Reproductive health is the direct servicing of an individual’s reproductive needs.	Reproductive rights are the individual legal rights to reproductive health care services with a focus on keeping abortion legal, standardizing sex education, and increasing access to family planning services.	Reproductive justice is the human right to control our bodies, our lives, our sexualities, our gender, our work, and our reproduction.
What’s the problem?	<p>Reproductive health outcomes are seen as a consequence of service accessibility, insurance, and individual care provided.</p> <p><i>Example: Unintended pregnancy due to lack of access to birth control or lack of education on effective birth control use</i></p>	<p>Restrictive laws prevent individuals from accessing abortion, birth control, and other reproductive care. Further, the manipulation of religious beliefs to restrict legal access to reproductive health care is a prevailing issue.</p> <p><i>Example: A religious university is exempt from covering birth control in its employee and student health care plan</i></p>	<p>An individual’s ability to exercise self-determination in their reproductive life (and beyond) is impacted by power inequities inherent in our society’s institutions, environment, economics, and culture.</p> <p><i>Example: Medicaid excluding coverage for fertility treatment services like in vitro fertilization (IVF)</i></p>
Framework Name	<i>Reproductive Health</i>	<i>Reproductive Rights</i>	<i>Reproductive Justice</i>

<p>Organizations / People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community health centers • School based clinics • Abortion providers <p><i>Example: Planned Parenthood, Whitman Walker Health Center</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials • Lawyers • Judges • Advocacy organizations <p><i>Example: NARAL, Center for Reproductive rights</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leaders • Organizers • Clergy / religious leaders <p><i>Example: SisterSong, Black Mamas Matter Alliance, Strong Families</i></p>
<p>Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building clinics in rural areas • Training more doctors to be reproductive service providers • Training providers on cultural competence and humility • Teaching sex education curriculums that are LGBTQ inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and federal advocacy • Sign-on letters, rallies, and other public actions targeting lawmakers • Lobbying • Lawsuits • Creating and advancing legislation that expand our legal protections and rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering the leadership of those most impacted by reproductive injustice • Building political power at the local and state level • Funding organizations run by women and trans people of color • Working in multi-racial, multi-ethnic coalitions with equitable power distribution and transparent processes
<p>Limitations</p>	<p>While service delivery, accessibility, and education are critical, they impact individuals (not systems) and do not address the root causes of inequity.</p>	<p>A legal right to reproductive services does not mean those services are accessible, equitably distributed, and non-coercive.</p>	<p>Reproductive justice is a new concept to some and requires a set of skills and analysis that not everyone has learned before or has access to.</p>

Where does NCJW fit in?

NCJW is a reproductive rights advocacy organization that uses the reproductive justice framework to inform our advocacy strategy and partnerships. As indicated in the chart above, the reproductive justice movement is led by those most impacted by structural reproductive and social oppression. As an organization comprised primarily of white women, we work diligently to be an ally to the reproductive justice movement and co-conspirators in our work towards shared liberation. Using the resources, skills, and knowledge we have put our energy towards federal, state, and local legislative advocacy, multiracial coalition building, and educating our own community on the important of all three frameworks.

Reproductive justice is a dynamic, multi-faceted framework with many varying definitions. This document is based off of the collective knowledge published and unpublished by reproductive health, rights, and justice leaders across the movement. We want to thank Forward Together for their resource “A new vision for advancing reproductive health, reproductive rights, and reproductive justice”, which served as the foundation for this piece. A special thank you to our friend Aimee Thorne-Thomsen of Advocates for Youth for her time and expertise