

NCJW and Reproductive Justice

What is reproductive justice?

Reproductive justice is a framework, movement, and vision. When reproductive justice is achieved, each person will have the power to make their own informed decisions about their body, sexuality, and future regardless of race, income and class, sexual orientation, immigration status, or other factors.

The formal reproductive justice framework was created in the mid-1990s by women of color. Inspired by universal human rights concepts, it grew out of a discussion of how US health care reform proposals would impact black women's lives and communities. From there, the reproductive justice movement was born, committed to achieving human rights for all. Specifically, these rights include:

1. the right to have full autonomy over our bodies;
2. the right to have or not have children;
3. the right to birth and/or parent our children with dignity; and
4. the right to live and/or raise a family in a safe, healthy environment.

The reproductive justice framework goes beyond the basic legal right to access key reproductive health services. Using a broader social justice and human rights lens, it seeks to advance moral and bodily autonomy, health equity, and unfettered access to comprehensive reproductive health care for all individuals and communities. It also emphasizes how multiple systems of discrimination intersect and influence these rights among marginalized communities. As a movement, it works to place the voices of those who have been marginalized at the center to lead the conversation for social change.

Why is NCJW shifting from the reproductive rights/health framework to reproductive justice?

NCJW has long worked to ensure the health, rights, and well-being of women, children, and families. Building on this legacy, we shift to the reproductive justice framework to more deeply focus on how key issues impact different communities in different ways, allowing us to advocate more effectively for lasting social change.

As Jews, we are taught, “*tzedek tzedek tirdof*,” to pursue justice for all. We know what it is like to be excluded and oppressed. We must not stand idly by while barriers to health care place anyone's moral autonomy, health, economic security, or well-being at risk. Further, NCJW believes our reproductive freedoms are integrally bound to our religious liberty; we are committed to advancing the goals of reproductive justice so every person can make their own moral and faith-informed decisions about their body, health, and family.

For more details, see “*Jewish Values and Reproductive Justice*” in the [Action Kit](#).

How is reproductive justice different from reproductive rights/health or the “choice” framework?

Reproductive justice is not a synonym for reproductive rights or reproductive choice. The framework highlights how multiple identities or factors — such as race, income, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, immigration status, ability, and geography — affect a person's ability to shape their reproductive life. This ensures that social change efforts ultimately address the full set of challenges impeding a person's autonomy.

For example, NCJW believes it is critical to keep abortion legal, and we will fight to protect this key reproductive right. But, through a reproductive justice lens, we recognize that keeping abortion legal alone is not enough to ensure every person can exercise that right. Low-wage women and women of color, who today are disproportionately low-income, already face disparities in access to affordable health care, including contraception. In most states, low-income women enrolled in Medicaid are denied insurance coverage of abortion due to a federal ban known as the Hyde Amendment. For women already struggling to make ends meet, lacking abortion coverage makes this care harder to access. Further, for women living in states where abortion clinics are scarce, an increasingly troublesome reality, abortion is pushed further out of reach. Without access, what do legal rights really mean?

What public policy issues relate to reproductive justice?

NCJW's reproductive justice initiative is focused on achieving health equity and universal access to health coverage, services, and information, specifically abortion and contraception. However, a range of issues can be associated with the four basic reproductive justice human rights concerns. Here are a few examples of policies that could fall under each human right:

1. **The right to have full autonomy over our bodies:** Living free from sexual assault, harassment, and violence; full equality for and fair treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals; freedom from gun violence.
2. **The right to have or not have children:** Comprehensive family planning information and services; comprehensive sex education; abortion availability and affordability.
3. **The right to birth and/or parent our children with dignity:** Universal access to health care for every person and family; family unification for immigrant communities; being paid a living wage.
4. **The right to live and/or raise a family in a safe, healthy environment:** Just, humane immigration policies; ending labor and sex trafficking; food security.

How will NCJW help advance reproductive justice?

As an ally to the reproductive justice movement, NCJW seeks to promote legislative measures that advance justice; combat regressive policies; and dismantle the deep-rooted systems of discrimination and inequality from which harmful policies arise. Building on our legacy of raising our Jewish voice for progress, NCJW will strengthen our efforts for health equity, reproductive freedom, and true moral autonomy for all by engaging in grassroots organizing, advocacy, community awareness, and service. We will elevate issues and related legislation by:

- ▶ educating and working with decision makers;
- ▶ building relationships and power with diverse partners;
- ▶ engaging in coalition efforts;
- ▶ organizing community events,
- ▶ speaking out in the press; and
- ▶ mobilizing constituents online and in person.

NCJW will act in solidarity with our partners, united in our vision for and commitment to reproductive justice.

Learn about key issues and find ways to take action at NCJW's Reproductive Justice Initiative webpage at my.ncjw.org/reproductivejustice. This site provides a toolkit with opportunities to engage with your lawmakers as well as program ideas to implement in your community. From raising awareness through artwork; educating your section and community through trainings; to contacting state or federal lawmakers and more, there is something that everyone can do to make a difference!

For more information about NCJW's Reproductive Justice Initiative or if you are working on reproductive justice advocacy or programming, please let us know!

Contact Leanne Gale, Leanne@ncjwdc.org.

NCJW thanks SisterSong: The National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective and the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health for assistance in developing this resource.