# Telehealth Abortions Expand Under Shield Laws in Five US States, Reaching 48,000 Cases



Between July and December 2023, about 48,000 people in the United States accessed telehealth abortions under new "shield laws," according to a report from #WeCount, a research initiative by the Society of Family Planning. These laws were enacted in five states—Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, and Washington—to protect medical providers who prescribe and ship abortion pills to patients in states where abortion is banned or severely restricted.

Shield laws, designed to avoid legal repercussions, allowed providers to send abortion medications across state lines. Monthly data showed around 8,000 telehealth abortions being conducted under these laws, with prescriptions being filled even in states where local laws forbid telehealth abortions or restrict abortion access.

Medication abortions, which use mifepristone and misoprostol, make up the majority of abortions in the U.S. By December 2023, telehealth abortions accounted for 19% of all U.S. abortions. These figures indicate a significant rise from just 4% when #WeCount began data collection in April 2022.

The surge in telehealth abortion access followed the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, which revoked the federal right to an abortion, leading to bans in many states. The implementation of shield laws centralized in Democratic-controlled states provided a legal channel for accessing abortion pills, thereby increasing overall abortion rates, which reached one million in 2023, the highest level in over a decade.

The findings underscore the adaptation to legal changes post-Dobbs, marking telehealth abortions as a critical component in reproductive healthcare access amidst varying state legislations.