

**For Immediate Release**  
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**LAKE FOREST HOSPITAL CITED FOR HIV-DISCRIMINATION BY  
AIDS LEGAL COUNCIL OF CHICAGO**

*Hospital denied medical attention to HIV+ pregnant woman, complaint alleges*

CHICAGO -- The AIDS Legal Council of Chicago has filed a complaint against Lake Forest Hospital for refusing to provide medical attention to an HIV-positive pregnant woman whose water had prematurely broken. The complaint was filed with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights.

According to the complaint, Sara Smith (not the client's real name) of Zion sought emergency care at Lake Forest Hospital on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2002 after suspecting a miscarriage. Unable to make the two-hour drive to her regular doctor's office at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Ms. Smith was advised to go to the nearest emergency room to be examined and receive appropriate care.

Once she arrived, Ms. Smith disclosed her HIV status to a nurse who proceeded to put on plastic gloves to take her information. She was subsequently informed by a doctor that Lake Forest Hospital did not provide pre-natal care to pregnant women who are HIV-positive and that she would need to seek assistance elsewhere. Another doctor then telephoned her health provider at Northwestern and reprimanded her for directing Ms. Smith to Lake Forest in the first place.

After an exam was performed, it was determined that Ms. Smith's fetus was no longer viable. She then left to make the trip to Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

"Our client needed medical attention, but instead she was scolded, humiliated and forced to drive two hours away to get the care she needed," said Ann Hilton Fisher, executive director of the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago. "This was more than insensitivity and poor judgment on the part of the hospital. It was blatant disregard for the law. We hope this complaint will ensure that this kind of discrimination does not repeat itself at Lake Forest."

Sara Smith had initially sought to have pre-natal care at Lake Forest Hospital because it was close to her home, but was referred instead to Northwestern because the hospital "did not have experience delivering babies to HIV-positive mothers". Ms. Smith was 18-weeks pregnant when her water suddenly broke.

"There was no legitimate reason why Lake Forest Hospital could not perform a routine miscarriage procedure after doctors discovered her fetus was not viable," continued Fisher. "It is the same procedure that *any* women – HIV-positive or not – would have required in similar circumstances. There was absolutely no reason to send her away."

The AIDS Legal Council of Chicago is the only area agency dedicated solely to providing no-cost legal help to low-income individuals with HIV and AIDS. Since 1988, it has assisted thousands of individuals at its Loop office and at its office at the CORE Center of Cook County Hospital.