

Stop Censoring Abortion



Tracking Social Media Suppression of Reproductive Health Information

As reproductive rights face growing attacks globally, access to accurate abortion information, especially online, has never been more critical. Social media platforms connect people to vital resources, especially in places where abortion is hard to access.

Yet in recent years, platforms have increasingly removed or hidden abortion-related content, even when it doesn't violate any laws and—as our campaign discovered—even when it violates none of a company's own stated content policies. Platforms often leave users without clear explanation or recourse, cutting access to essential healthcare information.

Through the Stop Censoring Abortion campaign, we collected stories from individuals, healthcare clinics, advocacy groups, and more. Together, they reveal nearly 100 examples of posts and resources related to abortion care being taken down from social media platforms.

Lessons Learned

Across our submissions, we saw systemic over-enforcement, vague and convoluted policies, arbitrary takedowns, sudden account bans, and ignored appeals. And in almost every case we reviewed, **the posts and accounts in question did not violate the platform's stated rules.**

- Most of the content reviewed simply provided factual, educational information and did not violate any stated platform policy.
- Meta frequently claimed posts violated its policies on Restricted Goods and Services, which prohibit offers to buy or sell pharmaceutical drugs, even though the posts very clearly did no such thing.
- Examples showed account suspensions and removals without sufficient warning—though Meta's policies dictate accounts require “repeated” violations to be removed.
- Many users also reported experiencing shadowbanning and de-ranking, where posts weren't removed but were instead quietly suppressed by the algorithm.

- Meta’s enforcement outcomes were deeply inconsistent and, in many cases, account restoration required a direct connection to Meta.

Our survey results also identified incidents on TikTok and LinkedIn, while a separate Center for Intimacy Justice survey found incidents with Google and YouTube as well.

How Platforms Can Do Better on Abortion-Related Speech

Based on our findings, we’re calling on platforms to take these steps to improve moderation of abortion-related speech, following the Santa Clara Principles:

- **Publish clear policies.** Users should not have to guess whether their speech is allowed.
- **Enforce rules consistently.** If a post does not violate a written standard, it should not be removed.
- **Provide real transparency.** Enforcement decisions must come with clear explanations.
- **Guarantee functional appeals.** Users must be able to challenge wrongful takedowns without relying on insider contacts.
- **Expand human review.** Reproductive rights is a nuanced issue and can be too complex to be left entirely to error-prone automated moderation systems.

Practical Tips for Users

Users should not have to worry about their posts being deleted or their accounts getting banned when they share information that doesn’t violate platform policies. But while platforms continue to fail, we’ve provided some practical tips to reduce risks of takedowns:

- **Consider limiting commonly flagged words and images.** Posts with pill images or certain keyword combinations (like “abortion,” “pill,” and “mail”) were often flagged.
- **Be as clear as possible.** Vague phrases like “we can help you get what you need” might look like drug sales to an algorithm.
- **Be careful with links.** Direct links to pill providers were often flagged. Spell out the links instead.
- **Expect stricter rules for ads.** Boosted posts face harsher scrutiny than regular posts.
- **Appeal wrongful enforcement decisions.** Requesting an appeal might get you a human moderator, or even better, review from Meta’s Independent Oversight Board.
- **Document everything and backup your content.** Screenshot all communications and enforcement decisions so you can share them with the press or advocacy groups, and export your data regularly in case your account vanishes overnight.

Keep fighting

Abortion information saves lives, and social media is the primary—and sometimes only—way for advocates and providers to get accurate information out to those who need it. So keep speaking out, and keep demanding accountability. Platforms need to know we’re paying attention, and we won’t stop fighting until everyone can share information about abortion freely, safely, and without fear of being silenced.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation is the leading nonprofit defending digital privacy, free speech, and innovation. <https://eff.org>