

What is Female Genital Cutting?

Female genital cutting means cutting, removing, or sewing closed some or all of a girl's or woman's private parts. FGC can also be called female circumcision or female genital mutilation (FGM).

What is the Law?

FGC is in the Michigan Public Health Code 333.9159, effective October 9, 2017. The laws:

- Prohibit FGM/C on minors;
- Allow exceptions for necessary medical procedures;
- Apply to parents/guardians who facilitate as well as the individual who performs the procedure;
- Prohibit travel outside the state for the purpose of FGC/M;
- Exclude cultural/ritual reasons and/or consent as a defense;
- Provide a civil cause of action by the victim for physical and emotional damages until the victim reaches age 28;
- Provide for a felony sentence of up to 15 year imprisonment; and
- Provide a basis for termination of parental rights.



Stock photos. Posed by models.

Depending on the facts and evidence in each specific case, FGC may amount to parental child abuse or neglect under the Child Protection Law.

- 1931 PA 328 (Michigan Penal Code), MCL 750.136 & MCL 750.136a
- 2017 PA 76, MCL 600.5851
- 2017 PA 78, MCL 600.2978
- 2017 PA 77, MCL 333.9159
- 2017 PA 193, MCL 712A.19b
- Child Protection Laws, MCL 722.621

Why is FGC Done?

Different communities and cultures have different reasons for practicing FGC. Social acceptability is the most common reason. Families often feel pressure to have their daughter cut so she is accepted by their community. Other reasons may include:

- **The desire to ensure a woman remains a virgin until marriage.** Parents believe FGC is in the child's best interest and therefore is an expression of love.
- **Hygiene.** Some communities believe that the external female genitals that are cut (the clitoris or the labia or both) are unclean.
- **Condition of marriage.** In some countries, a girl or woman is cut in order to be considered suitable for marriage.
- **Rite of passage.** In some countries, FGC is a part of the ritual that a girl goes through to be considered a woman.
- **Belief that FGC increases sexual pleasure for the man.**
- **Religious duty,** although no religion's holy texts require FGC.

Why Do Many Countries Oppose FGC?

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers FGC a human rights violation because:

- It violates the rights to health and bodily integrity.
- Is a form of violence and torture against women.
- Violates the rights of children who undergo the practice without consent.

Because of this many countries have made laws banning the practice of FGC.

Physical and Emotional Risks of FGC

Physical harm includes:

- Severe pain
- Serious bleeding
- Infections and diseases
- Difficulty urinating or painful menstrual periods
- Problems during or after childbirth
- Death as a result from some of these problems

Emotional harm includes:

- Anger at the person performing or allowing the procedure
- Trauma, including nightmares and flashbacks
- Depression, fear and feelings of helplessness
- Sexual fears, decreased sexual pleasure

There may be harms that are not listed above. These health risks can be short-term, long-term or both.

Who is at Risk?

Worldwide more than **3 million girls** are estimated to be at risk for FGC annually. Procedures are mostly carried out on young girls between infancy and adolescence, and occasionally on adult women. More than **200 million girls** and women alive today have been cut. FGC is concentrated in 30 countries across Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The practice is most common in the western, eastern, and north-eastern regions of Africa, in some countries in the Middle East and Asia, as well as among migrants from these areas. Some immigrant families in the US from these countries also practice FGC, or may send their daughters back to their family homeland for FGC. Other immigrant families stop practicing FGC once they are in the US.

Resources for More Information

World Health Organization
<http://bit.ly/2H1HBj6>

Office of Women's Health US
Department of Health and
Human Services
<https://bit.ly/2XFxKVt>

AHA Foundation
www.theahafoundation.org

Equality Now
www.equalitynow.org

Sahiyo
www.sahiyo.com

Tahirih Justice Center
www.tahirih.org

Orchid Project
www.orchidproject.org

FORWARD Youth
www.forwardyouth.org.uk

Addressing Female Genital
Mutilation/Cutting: A Training
Curriculum for Law Enforcement,
Educators, and Service Providers
<https://bit.ly/2GmvrQq>

References

Female Genital Mutilation Fact Sheet; World Health Organization (WHO); <http://bit.ly/2URIAqY>; ret. Sept. 2017.

Female Genital Cutting: A Fact Sheet from the Office of Women's Health; US Dept. of Health & Human Services, <https://bit.ly/2IW51bF>; ret. Jan. 2018.
Khatna, Khafz or Female Genital Cutting; Sahiyo, www.sahiyo.com; ret. April 2018.

What Is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM?); Forward Youth; www.forwardyouth.org.uk; ret. April 2018.

Michigan Compiled Laws; www.legislature.mi.gov ret. Oct. 2017.