

## Combatting Clinic Violence

In the wake of escalating violence against women's health clinics that provide abortions and their doctors and nurses, the President's FY 2000 budget will include \$4.5 million to support additional security for these clinics. Under this proposal, the Department of Justice would make security assessments and enhancements available to clinics deemed to be at high risk of violence. Security enhancements to improve safety and better protect health care providers and their patients might include closed circuit camera systems, improved lighting, motion detectors, alarm systems or bullet-resistant windows.

In recent years, violence against women's health care clinics has intensified. Most recently, Dr. Bernard Slepian was fatally shot through the window of his home. His death followed four non-fatal shootings in western New York and Canada over the last four years. In addition to shootings, between May and July of this year, about 20 health care clinics in three states were splattered with isobutyric acid, and two clinics in North Carolina were the victims of arson and attempted bombings. Clinics in Indiana, Tennessee, Kansas and Kentucky received letters that falsely claimed to contain anthrax.

This FY 2000 budget proposal builds on the Justice Department's National Task Force on Violence Against Health Care Providers announced on November 9 to coordinate the investigation of violence against women's health care clinics nationwide. The Task Force has begun working closely with local authorities and U.S. Attorneys investigating acts of violence against clinics by: coordinating national investigative efforts; creating an investigative clearinghouse for information related to clinic violence; and providing training to federal, state and local law enforcement personnel. A key missing piece in preventing clinic violence is funding for greater security. The Task Force will serve in an advisory capacity for the administration of these funds.