

U.S. Government Fact Sheet on Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C)

The United States is committed to ending female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). If you believe you are at risk of FGM/C, know of someone at risk of FGM/C, have questions about FGM/C, or have undergone FGM/C and need help or further information, please contact the number below.

What Is FGM/C?

FGM/C refers to cutting and other procedures that injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It may be called “female circumcision” in certain parts of the world. The practice has no health benefits and can lead to a range of physical and mental health problems.

What Are the Health Effects of FGM/C?

Immediate effects may include blood loss, severe pain, and sometimes death. Long-term health problems can include urinary infections, fistula, infertility, painful menstruation or sexual intercourse, and a potential increase in the risk of HIV/AIDS infection. In addition, women who have had FGM/C are significantly more likely to experience difficulties during childbirth and their babies are more likely to die as a result of the practice. Finally, the practice often leaves girls and women feeling scared, psychologically scarred, embarrassed, and distressed.

What Is the U.S. Government’s View on FGM/C?

The U.S. Government opposes FGM/C, no matter the type, degree, or severity, and no matter what the motivation for performing it. The U.S. Government understands that FGM/C may be carried out in accordance with traditional beliefs and as part of adulthood initiation rites. Nevertheless, the U.S. Government considers FGM/C to be a serious human rights abuse, and a form of gender-based violence and child abuse.

Why Is the United States Providing This FGM/C Notice?

The United States is committed to ending FGM/C to protect the health and well-being of, and advance the rights of, women and girls globally. The United States is working at home and in other countries to help educate people about the serious, damaging effects of FGM/C on women and girls.

What Are the Criminal Consequences of Performing or Assisting in FGM/C?

It is against U.S. law to perform FGM/C on a girl under the age of 18, or to send or attempt to send her outside the United States so FGM/C can be performed. Violation of the law is punishable by up to 5 years in prison, fines, or both. There is no exception for performing FGM/C because of tradition or culture. Cutting and other procedures that injure the female genital organs of a girl under 18 are prohibited under U.S. law.

What Are the Immigration Consequences of Violating the Laws Against FGM/C?

Violating the laws against FGM/C – even without a criminal conviction – may have significant immigration consequences, including making one inadmissible to or removable from the United States, as well as ineligible for some immigration benefits.

Have Women Who Have Undergone FGM/C Broken Any Laws?

A girl or woman who has undergone FGM/C is not at fault. She has not violated any U.S. laws by undergoing the procedure. Eligibility for travel to or for immigration benefits from the United States is not negatively affected by the fact that a person has undergone FGM/C.

Where Can One Find Additional Resources?

If you believe you are at risk of FGM/C or have undergone FGM/C, have questions about FGM/C, have information about someone who is performing FGM/C in the United States, or know of someone who may be at risk of having the procedure done here or outside the United States, please contact this number for additional information about available resources: **1-800-994-9662**