

Utah doctor accused in botched Maryland abortion

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Every other week, Nicola Riley jetted to the East Coast, performing abortions so she could gain custody of her children.

The Utah doctor was trying to establish a work history in Virginia or Maryland so she could move there and be with her kids.

But her medical license was suspended in Maryland in after she allegedly botched an abortion there in August and set off investigations into an alleged “scheme” by her employer to skirt the law by transporting patients across state lines. Riley was called a “dupe” by one state’s investigators.

Her Utah medical license is still intact, though it is likely under review by the state’s Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. That office wouldn’t comment about Riley, but did say in a prepared statement that DOPL has authority to investigate when another state takes action against a Utah doctor’s license.

“If a DOPL investigation shows evidence of unlawful conduct, the division would initiate an administrative proceeding and ask the Physicians Licensing Board to take action against the license,” according to spokeswoman Jennifer Bolton, who said Riley was scheduled to have a hearing in Maryland regarding her license in that state at the end of the month.

Riley’s Baltimore lawyer declined to comment, citing the ongoing proceedings.

This summer, Riley was hired by Steven C. Brigham to perform abortions at the Maryland offices of American Women’s Services, which also has locations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

In mid-August, Brigham administered abortive medications to kill fetuses and start contractions for three patients in a New Jersey clinic. The women, all between 18 to 25 weeks pregnant, were then transported to Maryland, where Riley surgically completed the terminations. Brigham doesn’t have a medical license in Maryland.

During surgery on a 18-year-old who was 21 weeks pregnant, Riley lacerated the girl’s uterus and intestines, known complications of abortion. The teen underwent emergency surgery.

Riley told Maryland investigators she was trained to perform abortions in the second trimester. But the Utah clinic where she works can only offer abortions up to 14 weeks gestation.

Maryland’s investigation triggered one in New Jersey, where a disciplinary board suspended Brigham’s license Wednesday, according to the Associated Press.

In New Jersey, it is illegal to perform abortions past 14 weeks gestation in a clinic. Its Attorney General’s office says the teen’s medical treatment is “emblematic of [Brigham’s] attempts to craft a scheme whereby he provides sub-standard medical care to New Jersey women while attempting to skirt the requirements of New Jersey law and to hide behind dupes that are employed as independent contractors in his practice.”

New Jersey did not take action against Riley because she was not practicing medicine there. She was, however, born in the Garden State. She earned a bachelor of science degree at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY, in 1987, according to her Utah medical license application. While she was an Army officer based at Fort Carson, Colo., she was convicted of a felony and spent a year in Fort Leavenworth. Two soldiers under her jurisdiction had committed credit card fraud and she had failed to report their crimes “in a timely manner,” so she was considered an accomplice.

In 1997, she became a medical student at the University of Utah, graduating in August 2002 and marrying Dustin Eric Coyle days later. They divorced in 2006.

Riley told the Maryland Physicians Board she received her abortion training at a Planned Parenthood in Colorado and at the Utah Women's Clinic in Salt Lake City. She said she has been the medical director of another women's clinic in Utah, apparently referring to Wasatch Women's in Millcreek, for the past five years.

Prior to the Maryland patient, Riley said she has had no other complications. The Utah licensing division reports no disciplinary actions against her.

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