

**TITLE 18 - CRIMES AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE**  
**PART I - CRIMES**  
**CHAPTER 7 - ASSAULT**

**§ 116. Female genital mutilation**

- (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), whoever knowingly circumcises, excises, or infibulates the whole or any part of the labia majora or labia minora or clitoris of another person who has not attained the age of 18 years shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 5 years, or both.
- (b) A surgical operation is not a violation of this section if the operation is—
- (1) necessary to the health of the person on whom it is performed, and is performed by a person licensed in the place of its performance as a medical practitioner; or
  - (2) performed on a person in labor or who has just given birth and is performed for medical purposes connected with that labor or birth by a person licensed in the place it is performed as a medical practitioner, midwife, or person in training to become such a practitioner or midwife.
- (c) In applying subsection (b)(1), no account shall be taken of the effect on the person on whom the operation is to be performed of any belief on the part of that person, or any other person, that the operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual.

(Added Pub. L. 104–208, div. C, title VI, § 645(b)(1), Sept. 30, 1996, 110 Stat. 3009–709.)

**Effective Date**

Section 645(c) of div. C of Pub. L. 104–208 provided that: “The amendments made by subsection (b) [enacting this section] shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [Sept. 30, 1996].”

**Congressional Findings**

Section 645(a) of div. C of Pub. L. 104–208 provided that: “The Congress finds that—

“(1) the practice of female genital mutilation is carried out by members of certain cultural and religious groups within the United States;

“(2) the practice of female genital mutilation often results in the occurrence of physical and psychological health effects that harm the women involved;

“(3) such mutilation infringes upon the guarantees of rights secured by Federal and State law, both statutory and constitutional;

“(4) the unique circumstances surrounding the practice of female genital mutilation place it beyond the ability of any single State or local jurisdiction to control;

“(5) the practice of female genital mutilation can be prohibited without abridging the exercise of any rights guaranteed under the first amendment to the Constitution or under any other law; and

“(6) Congress has the affirmative power under section 8 of article I, the necessary and proper clause, section 5 of the fourteenth Amendment, as well as under the treaty clause, to the Constitution to enact such legislation.”