

INFORMED CHOICE POLICY

The *Standards of Midwifery Practice* established by the Midwifery Regulatory Council of Nova Scotia (MRCNS) include:

STANDARD FIVE

The midwife promotes informed choice throughout the childbearing experience.

The midwife:

- 5.1 provides relevant information to the client in an unbiased manner;
- 5.2 encourages clients to actively participate in decisions about their care and the manner in which services are provided;
- 5.3 discusses with the client the scope, standards and limitations of midwifery care;
- 5.4 acts as an advocate for the client and their newborn;
- 5.5 respects the client's right to decline treatments or procedures;
- 5.6 advises the client of maternity care standards and the midwife's professional judgment with respect to safe care.

In the interactive process of informed choice, midwives provide clients with information and resources to assist them in making decisions about their own care. This process promotes shared responsibility between the midwife and client, accepting the client as the primary decision-maker. The client's experiences, values and preferences are part of the informed choice process, and the midwife makes efforts to understand and appreciate what is motivating the client's choices. It is the midwife's responsibility to facilitate the ongoing exchange of current knowledge and discussion of choices in a non-authoritarian, unbiased manner, including sharing what is known and unknown about procedures, tests and treatments. Where appropriate, the midwife also has a duty to recommend care they determine is in the best interest of their client; the client may accept or decline their recommendation.

The MRCNS requires midwives to provide clients with the following information during the course of midwifery care:

- Services that will be provided within the scope of midwifery practice,

- including choice of birthplace;
- Standards and guidelines of midwifery practice, including continuity of care, consultation and transfer of care, and supportive care;
 - Responsibilities of the client;
 - Confidentiality and access to client records;
 - Second birth attendant arrangements, if applicable;
 - Student and/or supervised practice arrangements, if applicable.
 - Potential benefits and risks of procedures, tests and treatments, including available alternatives;
 - Current evidence-based and community standards and practices.

The midwife must also make reasonable efforts to ensure that the client has adequate opportunity and time to engage in the informed choice process. Informed choice discussions should be documented in the medical record and results discussed with the health care team where appropriate.

Should an informed choice discussion result in a client choosing care outside of the midwifery Standards of Practice, the midwife should refer to the Policy on Requests for Care Outside Midwifery Standards (2022).

References

College of Midwives of Alberta. (2016). Informed Choice Policy. Accessed at: <https://www.albertamidwives.org/document/5006/P18-Informed-Choice-Policy.pdf>

College of Midwives of Manitoba. (2021). Standard on Informed Choice. Accessed at: <https://midwives.mb.ca/document/4594/standard-on-informed-choice.pdf>

BCCNM (2021). Policy on informed choice. Retrieved from: https://www.bccnm.ca/Documents/standards_practice/rm/RM_Policy_on_Informed_Choice.pdf

Adopted by the MRCNS on April 22, 2009

Amended by the MRCNS on May 31, 2018

Amended by MRCNS August 2022

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