

Bringing Midwifery Services to Island Families

About Midwifery

What is a midwife?

Midwives are health care providers that care for their clients before and throughout pregnancy, labour, birth, and the postpartum period. Midwives are experts in low-risk, normal pregnancy and birth.¹

Midwifery in Canada

Midwifery is regulated and publicly funded in Canada by provincial and territorial governments. Once PEI and Yukon implement programs, midwifery services will be available in every province and territory.

What are the core principles of midwifery care in Canada?^{2 3}

Informed Choice

Midwives respect their clients as the primary decision makers about their own care. Midwives allow enough time during each client visit to provide evidence-based information, answer questions, and have meaningful discussion.

Partnership

Midwives work collaboratively with their clients in a non-authoritarian way to ensure the needs and experiences of each individual and family are respected.

Evidence-based Care

Midwives combine research, evidence-based guidelines, clinical experience and the unique values and needs of their clients to provide safe, high quality health care.

Continuity of Care

Midwives work in pairs or small teams, to ensure their clients almost always receive care from a midwife they have met. Midwives are on call at all times to answer questions, discuss concerns, or to care for their clients during labour and birth.

¹ Association of Ontario Midwives, What is a Midwife?

² Canadian Association of Midwives, What is a Midwife?

³ Canadian Association of Midwives, The Canadian Midwifery Model of Care Position Statement

Choice of Birth Place

Midwives are equipped to care for their clients at home, in a hospital, at a birth centre, or in a health clinic. Midwives provide care to clients in their birth setting of choice, depending on the facilities available in each area.

Collaborative Care

Midwives are health care providers who work independently and in collaboration with other healthcare professionals as needed.

Professional Autonomy

As autonomous primary health care providers, midwives provide comprehensive care during pregnancy, labour, postpartum and the newborn period. Midwives work in home, hospital and community settings, including maternity centres and birth centres. Midwives access emergency services as needed. Where available, midwives maintain hospital privileges for the admission of clients and their newborns. Midwifery in Canada is a direct entry profession and is self-regulated. Midwifery services are publicly funded and integrated within the Canadian healthcare system.

Introducing Midwifery Services to PEI

Why introduce midwifery to PEI?

Integrating midwives into PEI's health care system will increase options for quality maternity care available to Island families. Solutions have been put in place to ensure all parents receive the prenatal care they need, such as prenatal care provision by Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners. Additional options will help to enhance maternal care services. Health care consumers have voiced a desire to access midwifery care. Midwifery services will enable more parents to receive care from the same provider throughout their pregnancy and reduce pressures placed on health care providers and hospitals, while improving health outcomes. Midwifery care is associated with high client satisfaction rates, and decreased rates of medical intervention.⁴

How is the work being done?

Health PEI and the Department of Health and Wellness have set up a Midwifery Services Steering Committee to guide the midwifery services development process. The committee is composed of a variety of members with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, representing the varied and complex factors and considerations involved in ensuring a sustainable maternity care system that provides high quality health care to Island families.

⁴ Patricia A. Janssen et al., Outcomes of Planned Hospital Birth Attended by Midwives Compared with Physicians in British Columbia. (2007).

What work has been done so far?

The Midwifery Services Steering Committee has formed a number of active working groups dedicated to the development of sustainable midwifery services. Steering Committee and working group members have created a guiding framework for the development of midwifery services, a Midwifery Services Program Development Lead has been hired, regulations are currently being developed, stakeholder engagement is underway, and the Steering Committee is continuing to meet regularly to advance the midwifery services development process.

Engagement

What is the purpose of engagement?

As part of the midwifery services development process, a number of focus groups are taking place to share information about midwifery and to gain feedback to inform program elements, regulations, and the implementation plan. A survey is also being used to gain additional information.

Who is being engaged?

Perinatal care providers, other health care providers, community partners, citizens and other government departments are being asked to provide information and guidance.

What happens after engagement?

Following engagement activities, the Steering Committee will review the findings, as well as information gathered from other sources, and finalize the midwifery service development plan.