



BERMUDA NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COUNCIL

Code Of Conduct- For Midwives

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The Code of Conduct for Midwives (“The Code”) sets out the professional conduct and ethical values that every midwife registered with the Bermuda Nursing and Midwifery Council (BNMC) must uphold. It describes the principles of professional behaviour that guide safe practice, and clearly outlines the conduct expected of midwives by their colleagues and the broader community.

The code was developed in collaboration with midwifery professionals.

The midwife shall maintain at all times the highest standard of care and professional conduct. It is the responsibility of the midwife to be familiar with and comply with The Code by utilizing sound judgement when applying the principles in all areas of practice. While no standard can foresee or address every issue or ethical dilemma which may arise unexpectedly throughout a professional career, the decisions and actions of the midwife must be justifiable. The midwife has a duty to practice safely and effectively making the interests of women and families a priority.

Generally, midwives provide care in a variety of settings including homes, clinics, hospitals, and birth centers. In Bermuda you must also be aware of, and work in accordance with, the rules set by each of the locations where you practice, including institutional policies and procedures, and community standards.

The Code outlines how midwives are to function in order to assure the integrity of the profession. It includes five principles of conduct, each with an explanatory value statement. Each value statement is accompanied by practical guidance to demonstrate how to apply it in practice.

The five principles of conduct include:

- Professional Knowledge and Practice.
- Legal and Ethical Compliance.
- Person Centered Care.
- Leadership and Collaboration.
- Cultural Practice and Respectful Relationships

Professional Knowledge and Practice

Midwives must demonstrate professional knowledge and practice, and maintain the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors required for competence.

The Code is not a substitute for requirements outlined in the current Bermuda Nursing and Midwifery Act, or other relevant legislation. Where there is an actual or perceived conflict between the Code and any law, the Nursing and Midwifery Act shall take precedence. Serious or repeated failure to abide by this Code may be considered professional misconduct, and may result in consequences for the midwife's registration status.

Professional knowledge and practice focuses on developing and maintaining the skills required to provide quality care to clients. All midwives practicing in Bermuda must possess the knowledge and skills relevant to their practice, exercising professional judgment to provide safe and effective care. Midwives must be committed to an ongoing process of learning, self-assessment, evaluation, and identifying ways to best meet client needs.

1. Work within the boundaries of the Bermuda Nurse and Midwifery Act related to scope of practice and other relevant legislations.
2. Demonstrate competence in all areas of practice to include pre-pregnancy and antepartum care, labor and postpartum care, and ongoing holistic care of women and newborns.
3. Midwives are responsible for decisions and actions related to the care of newborns and women, and accountable for the outcomes of the client care.
4. Adhere to the standards of the profession, and other relevant standards that guides practice.
5. Provide health counselling and education for women across the lifespan, families, and other health care professionals.
6. Maintain accurate, objective, and legible records of the care that was provided for the client.
7. Offer treatments based on current and accepted evidence-based practice, and the resources available.
8. Work with agencies to develop and update health policies to identify the needs of newborns, women and families to ensure access to health and resources are allocated fairly.

9. Disclose conflict of interest if you are also a member of another regulated profession and acting in this capacity:
10. Inform clients if any part of a proposed service or treatment is outside the scope of midwifery practice or will be administered outside your role as a midwife.
11. Maintain midwifery records separate from the records for the practice of the other profession.
12. Inform clients that they are not obligated to receive care from you in your capacity as another regulated professional.
13. Recognize and work within their scope of practice as determined by their education, training, authorization, competence, qualifications and experience, in accordance with local policy.
14. Take reasonable steps to ensure any person to whom a midwife delegates, refers, or hands over care, has the qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and scope of practice to provide the care required.
15. Maintain and carry supplies and equipment necessary for safe care in home or out-of-hospital settings.
16. Continuously monitor and make efforts to improve the quality of your practice using reflection, client and peer feedback.
17. Midwives who are practice owners must also:
 - Maintain a practice environment that supports compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, policies, and standards governing the practice of midwifery.
 - Ensure essential operational and clinical supplies are available to midwives in your practice.
 - Develop and maintain quality improvement systems to support the professional performance of midwives and to enhance the quality of client care.

Legal and Ethical Compliance

Midwives must uphold the integrity of the profession by acting accordingly to protect clients from harmful, unethical and incompetent practices.

Practice with integrity in compliance with legal requirements, ethical standards, and regulations of local and international governing bodies. Taking appropriate actions to protect fundamental human rights of newborns, women and families.

1. Exemplify professional conduct by performing safe and effective person-centered care within the scope of practice of a nurse midwife to promote health and protect the rights of newborns, women and families.
2. Complete a qualified midwifery education program recognized by the Bermuda Nursing and Midwifery Council. Maintain and update registration as a midwife with BNMC by fulfilling the registration requirements and completing relevant continuing professional education activities.
3. Provide care to women and families with respect to diversity and cultural sensitivity, while protecting the morals, values and beliefs of clients within specific cultures.
4. Maintain confidentiality to protect the right to privacy for all clients, and client records in oral, written, electronic communication and documentation.
5. Exceptions to sharing client information may include parameters for sharing information with health professionals and health care entities involved with the client's care; and, disclosure of information mandated by Bermuda and international law.
6. Guard against breaches of confidentiality by protecting information from improper disclosure at all times.
7. Making a comment via social media, when if done on a midwives' own time and in their own space regarding an incident or client in the scope of their employment, may be a breach of client confidentiality or privacy as well as professional boundary violation.
8. Avoid revealing client information to social media, news media, personal emails, video, or pictures that will violate privacy laws.

9. Obtain the client's informed consent before disclosing information and confirm the client understands the rationale for sharing information.
 - Provide accurate information and advice to clients that will enhance informed decision-making regarding care of the newborn, woman and family.
 - Acknowledge the client's right to refuse care based on their fundamental beliefs and values.
 - Adhere to the current legislation regarding the consent of a minor or consent of a person with a mental health disorder with regard to, family planning, women's health and care of the newborn.
10. Complete an accurate record of the client's care and treatment without falsification making sure it is written clearly, dated and signed according to agency policy and standards of practice.
11. Recognize violations of the law and ethical codes against women, children and families, advocating to eliminate the health risk to the individual and family.
12. Document and report any adverse outcomes or incidents of client care to the appropriate authority in a timely manner, according to the agency policy to protect the client's right to receive quality care.
13. Do not abandon a woman in labor.
14. Abide by the mandatory reporting legislation to protect women and families at risk of abuse and neglect. Advocate for vulnerable persons at risk of physical harm and sexual exploitation, taking the necessary actions to report to the appropriate authorities.
15. If a newborn, woman or family member is harmed in an adverse event that occurred while under care of a health professional, it is the responsibility of the midwife to openly and honestly discuss the events that occurred, report to the appropriate personnel, and document using the correct reporting tool according to agency policy.
16. Recognize physical and mental limitations by performing self-assessment and determine fit for practice.

Person-Centered Care

Midwives must support shared decision making in providing person-centered care, the midwife must develop a partnership with the client to disclose relevant information that leads to an ongoing plan of care and achieves desired outcomes

17. Midwives may decide not to participate in activities for which they hold deep moral opposition; however, the emphasis on individual conscience should not deprive women of essential health services.

Focus on providing patient-centered care through the promotion of shared decision-making between all parties. Providing specialized midwifery care that is safe, current, evidenced based and customized to the unique needs of their patient population.

1. Establish a person-centered approach to managing a woman's care and concerns, supporting the woman in a manner consistent with personal values and preferences.
2. Advocate on behalf of the woman where necessary, and recognize when substitute decision-makers are needed (including legal guardians or holders of power of attorney).
3. Act as effective role models and provide health promotion for women throughout their life cycle.
4. Promote the interests of patients or clients by facilitating individuals and groups gaining access to health and social care giving information and support relevant to their needs.
5. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the relationship they have with clients, ensuring that all aspects of the relationship focuses exclusively on the needs of the client or families.
6. Support the right of women to seek second and/or subsequent opinions, or the right to refuse treatment/care.

Leadership and Collaboration

Midwives must demonstrate leadership and collaboration, guide the care of the client in consultation with the interprofessional care team, and promote equity in access to quality health services

Leadership and Collaboration demands that midwives work with clearly defined roles and responsibilities in all health care settings, including interprofessional teams. Communication, cooperation, and coordination are integral to the principles of leadership and collaboration. This requires the midwife to work independently, as well as in collaboration with other midwives, health care providers, and unlicensed care providers in relationships of reciprocal trust.

1. Maintain accountability and responsibility for clients in your care and for your professional decisions and actions.
2. Provide continuity of care by developing an ongoing relationship of trust with clients.
3. Establish and work within systems that are clear to clients as a sole practitioner, part of a primary care team of midwives, or a member of an inter-professional care team.
4. Develop and follow a consistent plan of care in collaboration with the interprofessional care team.
5. Practice with clearly defined roles and responsibilities based on scopes of practice.
6. Assume responsibility for all the care you provide.
7. Ensuring that the results from all tests, treatments, consultations, and referrals are followed-up and acted upon in a timely manner.
8. Provide complete and accurate client information to other midwives or care providers at the time care is transferred over to them.
9. Take reasonable steps to ensure that a midwife or another care provider known to the client is available to attend the birth.
10. Take reasonable steps to continue in a supportive role with clients when their care is transferred to another care provider.

Cultural Practice and Respectful Relationships

Midwives must ensure culturally safe and respectful practice. Culturally safe and respectful practice requires having knowledge of how a midwife's own culture, values, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs influence their interactions with women and families, the community and colleagues.

Midwives engage with women as individuals in a culturally safe and respectful way, foster open, honest and compassionate professional relationships

1. Demonstrate cultural practice and respectful relationships, midwives must act without discrimination based on factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, or nature of the health problem.
2. Account for ensuring promotion and protection of the interest and dignity of patients and clients, irrespective of gender, age, race, ability, sexual orientation, economic status, lifestyle, culture and religious or political beliefs.
3. Respond to the psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of women seeking health care, whatever their circumstances (non-discrimination).
4. Recognize and respond to the voices of women and families about their experiences of and satisfaction with care.
5. Empower women/families to speak for themselves on issues affecting the health of women and families within their culture/society.
6. Understand the adverse consequences that ethical and human rights violations have on the health of women and infants, and will work to eliminate these violations.
7. Recognize that bullying and harassment takes many forms, including behaviors such as physical and verbal abuse, racism, discrimination, violence, aggression, humiliation, pressure in decision-making, exclusion and intimidation directed towards people or colleagues.
8. Act to eliminate bullying, harassment, collective bullying and discrimination in the workplace by reporting such behavior and escalate their concerns if an appropriate response does not occur.

References:

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