

POSITION STATEMENT

POSITION STATEMENT ON HOME BIRTH

RATIONALE

The best available evidence from North America and international studies demonstrates that midwife attended home births are associated with optimal labour and birth outcomes. Midwife attended planned home births in Canada are associated with fewer obstetrical interventions and no increase in maternal/fetal/neonatal mortality or morbidity compared to births planned to be in hospital.

The Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM/ACSF) recognizes that planned home birth for healthy women is safe and that the definition of safety in maternity care includes physical safety, as well as a woman's self-defined values of cultural, spiritual and emotional safety for herself, her baby and her family.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- Women have the right to make an informed choice regarding their place of birth.
- Planned home birth should be recommended for healthy, low-risk women.
- Women who plan home births experience reduced obstetric and neonatal interventions and a course of care that facilitates normal, physiologic birth.
- Evidence-based birth site selection requires ongoing assessment and care throughout the antepartum, intrapartum and postpartum periods. Midwives have unique expertise in the use of low technology procedures and are skilled in intrapartum assessment and care in low resource settings. Therefore, midwives are ideal primary care providers for mothers and newborns in the home setting.
- Integration of midwives into a health care system that allows for timely consultation, referral, and transfer when necessary, enhances the safety of planned home birth.
- Women have the right to refuse recommended care. If a woman will not accept her midwife's recommendation for transfer to hospital from planned home birth after she begins labour, it is a midwife's ethical duty to remain with the woman and offer her midwifery skills in the home setting to the degree that the woman will accept care.

POSITION STATEMENT

To ensure women's choice and safe access to planned home birth, CAM/ACSF calls on every province and territory to expand regulated and funded midwifery services.

Midwives in Canada should provide all women with informed choice about planned home birth.

All midwives in Canada should provide home birth services to women.

All women under the care of a midwife require unimpeded access to obstetrical and neonatal services and personnel as needed to provide emergent care regardless of intended place of birth.

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