

# Documentation Guidelines

## Why is documentation so important?

The healthcare community plays an important role in screening, addressing, and documenting family violence. A midwifery appointment may be the first and only setting where disclosures of violence can be made in a safer space. Creating and maintaining accurate records is an essential part of midwifery care. Documentation is a way to understand who your client is, what care you have provided, and what care you intend to provide. Appropriate documentation can help protect survivors and their children, particularly if violence leads to court proceedings.

### 10 Documentation Tips

1. <b>Systematically record information in a timely and legible manner.</b>	Include the date and time of events, discussions, or other provisions of care. Note when the information is recorded.
2. <b>Write in a style that is factual, objective/unbiased, specific, and to the point.</b>	How are your actions, conversations, and observations related to safety and risk factors? Avoid vague or generic descriptions such as “the parent is non-compliant”.
3. <b>Avoid negative, biased, and prejudicial language.</b>	Focus on behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you see or hear that led you to your conclusion?</li> <li>• What would you need to see or hear to change your conclusions?</li> </ul>
4. <b>Don't use acronyms or jargon.</b>	e.g. UTI – NO; Urinary Track Infection – YES
5. <b>Don't include details of the client's intimate life unless it is relevant to the case.</b>	
6. <b>Avoid using medical diagnoses that have not been verified by a medical provider.</b>	Instead of saying the client is depressed, you could say the client states they are feeling sad or are in a depressed mood. Alternatively, you can describe the symptoms and experiences.
7. <b>Do not leave blanks.</b>	Instead, write <b>N/A</b> or <b>Not Applicable</b>
8. <b>Personal notes are discouraged.</b>	Given they are likely to be subjective and may have potentially damaging consequences.
9. <b>Use quotation marks to differentiate remarks that come directly from the client.</b>	Place quotes around exact words used by a client but not around paraphrased remarks.
10. <b>Don't write personal conclusions about the situation.</b>	Conclusions without enough facts are generally inadmissible in court. Document the facts clearly and objectively and let others draw conclusions in the future.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

Think about how you would speak on camera. Stick to what is relevant, and describe what you see using objective, description language.

## Confidentiality and Disclosure

A midwife must protect the confidentiality of all professionally obtained information. They will disclose information only when required or allowed by law to do so, or when clients have consented to the disclosure.

### FIVE TIPS TO PREPARE FOR MANDATORY OR LEGAL DISCLOSURES

01

Ensure there is appropriate documentation granting legal disclosure OR determine if the situation requires mandatory disclosure.

02

Get legal advice from a legal aid clinic or midwifery professional association.

03

Only give what is needed. Do not provide more information than is required or allowed. Stick to relevant documentation.

04

Ensure the documentation given is accurate, complete, and up to date.

05

Take reasonable efforts to inform the client of what's happening. Things like:

1. Who wants the information? What is the circle of care<sup>1</sup> and who is part of the circle?
2. Why is the information being requested?
3. How will the information be used?
4. What specific information is being disclosed?
5. What are the repercussions of giving consent or refusing permission for the disclosure?
6. Is informed consent<sup>2</sup> permanent?
7. How can consent be revoked?

<sup>1</sup> Circle of Care is a term commonly used to describe the ability of health care providers, such as midwives, nurses, and physicians, to assume an individual's implied consent to collect, use or disclose personal health information to provide health care.

<sup>2</sup> In general, informed consent is considered valid until the client revokes it, or there are significant changes to the client's situation that would require regaining consent.

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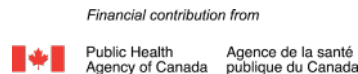
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Midwives  
Recognize & Respond  
to Family Violence



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