

Checklist for Supporting Clients Experiencing Violence

Family violence can happen to anyone, regardless of demographics or socioeconomic background. However, racism, colonialism, sexism, ableism, and legacies of intergenerational trauma create socioeconomic inequalities that push people to the margins. Marginalized people are then labelled 'at risk' due to unmet basic needs such as housing, food security, and access to appropriate healthcare.

Understanding the structural roots of violence and linking this awareness to clinical practice can influence health outcomes. Your position of [power and privilege](#) as a health care provider also impacts how you will support your clients in situations of family violence.

As health care providers, midwives can have a positive impact on health outcomes by cultivating safer and more [accountable environments](#). This means using culturally appropriate and non-judgemental approaches to care that meet people where they are, and often involves supporting people to meet basic human needs.

As midwives navigate their client relationships, there are many things to consider when providing trauma-informed and trauma-aware care.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of factors to think about and implement.



SAFETY, RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING, SELF-CARE, AND COLLABORATION

- Have safe contact information for the client **confirmed** by them.
- Have [family violence resources](#) ready to refer to as needed: Recognizing & Responding to Family Violence, Asking About Intimate Partner Violence and Children's Exposure to IPV, Assessing the Immediate Risk of Violence.
- Have a perinatal safety plan template ready, consider using plain language and an image.
- Make the clinical space welcoming and accessible:
 - use clear signage to identify your location
 - represent diverse bodies in pictures (ie. not only white hetero-presenting bodies)
 - have condoms and harm reduction supplies in private, accessible locations, such as a bathroom, or clinic room while clients are waiting for the midwife
 - place posters with local family violence hotlines or resource centres in bathrooms
 - have an all-gender bathroom
- Establish a process with other practicing midwives to check in about your daily whereabouts.
- Create a debriefing and regular self-care plan for yourself that feels manageable. Consider creating or joining a peer review that is relevant to your client population such as a harm reduction/ outreach model.
- Where possible, consider partnering with a local doula/birth worker program for more supportive client care and to collectively meet client needs, including emotional needs.
- Get training in de-escalation techniques, and where possible, use de-escalation techniques and alternatives to calling 911/police. Consider creating practice agreement policies that make sense in your local region.
- Create and maintain relationships with local social workers in hospitals or social service agencies. When possible, be present in meetings with child protection agencies to demonstrate midwifery care is comprehensive and continuous.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

- Partner with Indigenous health care providers, Elders/Knowledge Keepers, and local organizations where possible. Establish meaningful professional relationships where you can refer to each other.
- Familiarize yourself with the work of an Indigenous/Aboriginal Midwife and their extensive scope of care.
- Take cultural safety for health care provider training such as [San'yas](#) and be respectfully aware of local Indigenous protocols and organizations.
- Familiarize yourself with newcomer and settlement services including [interpretation](#), shelter, and housing resources. A good starting point: ccrweb.ca/en/members.
- [Take training and read training materials](#) to build your cultural competence as a health care provider working with diverse communities.



BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

💰 Financial supports

- Consider creating a donation process at your practice where local community members can donate items such as premature and 0-3 clothes, diapers/wipes, bassinets, prenatal vitamins, pregnancy clothing, etc.
- Arrange or facilitate local and/or regional financial and social supports for pregnancy such as nutritional allowance and baby essentials. Familiarize yourself with the paperwork required and the follow-up process for funds to flow.
- Assist with transportation to and from appointments. This could include providing a budgeted amount, bus tickets, or taxi chits. Another option is to have a rideshare (eg. Uber) reimbursement mechanism.

⚙️ Services

- Create a researched list of free and accessible legal aid options in your area.
- Have a list of free/low-cost tax processing services and resources including the Canada Child Benefit (CCB).
- Keep pre-paid phone cards on hand.

🏠 Housing

- Have a list of all the local and regional housing support options. This may be via organizations in your area with clear referral and intake processes or criteria. If housing is not possible in your area, find interim solutions such as a hotel/inn.

🍴 Food

- Have on hand local gift cards from grocery stores or coffee shops, like Tim Horton's. Consider incremental amounts so more or less can be given based on individual client needs. Is there a food bank in your area? What is the process to access it?
- Are there food pantries, community fridges, soup kitchens, and meal services available in the community?

+ Health care

- Have a list of mental health practitioners and services to refer to for counseling and therapy. Be clear on the referral process, length, and type of care offered. Include resources that are sliding scale or offer free/low-cost services.
- Familiarize yourself with the process to prescribe non-routine over-the-counter medications and know what is/is not covered by a regional/territorial social support program such as a drug benefit program.
- Establish a process for medication access and reimbursement for clients. For example, are clients covered by a social support program or non-insured health benefits? If not, do you have such funds in your practice or through a local/regional support program, community groups, or family health teams?

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

Visit canadianmidwives.org/family-violence/resources/ for the following tip sheets and tools in our resource toolkit Midwives Recognize and Respond to Family Violence:

- Recognizing & Responding to Family Violence
- Asking About Intimate Partner Violence
- Assessing the Immediate Risk of Violence
- Documentation Guidelines
- Home Visit Risk Assessment
- Home Visit Safety Planning
- Safety Planning Templates
- Help Lines Poster & National Resources