

POSITION STATEMENT ON HOME BIRTH

RATIONALE

The best available international evidence from jurisdictions where home birth services are integrated into the health care system demonstrates that midwife-attended, planned home births are associated with optimal labour and birth outcomes.¹⁻¹⁶ Midwife-attended, planned home births in Canada are associated with fewer obstetrical interventions and no increase in maternal, fetal, and neonatal mortality or morbidity compared to births planned to be in hospital.⁸⁻¹⁰ Midwifery care and home and birth center birth are strongly associated with both initiation and breastfeeding at six months.⁸

The Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM/ACSF) affirms that planned home birth for healthy individuals is safe. CAM/ACSF recognizes that childbearing people define safety in a variety of ways including self-defined values of physical, cultural, spiritual and emotional safety for themselves, their baby, and their family.¹⁸⁻²⁴

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) also recognizes the safety of planned home births and supports the client's right to choose their place of birth.²⁵

PRINCIPLES

- Everyone has the right to kindness and respect in reproductive care.
- Everyone has the right to make an informed choice regarding place of birth.
- Evidence-based decision-making about place of birth requires ongoing assessment of health and needs for care throughout the antepartum, intrapartum, and postpartum periods.
- Everyone has the right to refuse recommended care and remain free from coercion. If a person will not accept their midwife's recommendation for place of birth, the midwife should consider the principles of autonomy and harm reduction.
- Midwives have education, expertise, and a model of practice that facilitates physiologic birth. Midwives are skilled in intrapartum assessment and care in community and home settings. Therefore, midwives are ideal primary care providers for individuals and their newborns in the home setting.
- Integration of midwives into the health care system is essential to facilitate consultation, referral, and transfer when indicated, and enhances the safety of planned home birth.
- All midwifery clients have a right to access available medical services when indicated, regardless of intended place of birth.
- People who plan home birth experience reduced obstetric and neonatal interventions and a course of care that facilitates normal, physiologic birth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure choice and safe access to planned home birth, CAM/ACSF calls on every jurisdiction to expand regulated and publicly funded midwifery services.

Midwives in Canada should provide all clients with informed choice about planned home birth, and planned home birth should be recommended for healthy individuals.

All intrapartum midwifery services in Canada should offer choice of home birth to clients.

All midwives in Canada should inform clients about the option to give birth at home where available.

Health services should establish systems that support a healthy interprofessional culture, including effective communication and teamwork, to support best outcomes for planned home births.

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