



Core Document

Definition of Midwifery

Midwifery is the profession of midwives¹, only midwives practise midwifery. It has a unique body of knowledge, skills and professional attitudes drawn from disciplines shared by other health professions such as science and sociology, but practised by midwives within a professional framework of autonomy, partnership, ethics and accountability.

Midwifery is an approach to care of women and their newborn infants whereby midwives:

- optimise the normal biological, psychological, social and cultural processes of childbirth and early life of the newborn;
- work in partnership with women, respecting the individual circumstances and views of each woman
- promote women's personal capabilities to care for themselves and their families
- collaborate with midwives and other health professionals as necessary to provide holistic care that meets each woman's individual needs

Midwifery care is provided by an autonomous midwife. Midwifery competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) are held and practised by midwives, educated through a pre-service/pre-registration midwifery education programme that meets the ICM global standards for midwifery education.

In some countries where the title 'midwife' is not yet protected, other health professionals (nurses and doctors) may be involved in providing sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health care to women and newborns. As these health professionals are not midwives they do not possess the competencies of a midwife and do not provide midwifery skills, but rather aspects of maternal and newborn care.

Adopted at Toronto Council meeting, 2017

Due for next review 2023

¹ As per the ICM International Definition of the Midwife <http://internationalmidwives.org/who-we-are/policy-and-practice/icm-international-definition-of-the-midwife/>