

# Inclusive Midwifery Care and Human Rights

**CMRC Competency: 1.E.1**

**Duration:** 15 minutes



Canadian Midwifery | Conseil canadien des  
Regulators Council | ordres de sages-femmes

## GUIDING QUESTION

How can inclusive care help me **uphold human rights** as a midwife?



## Inclusive Midwifery Care

Inclusive care means providing holistic care that meets the needs and desires of all birthing people, including Indigenous clients, racialized clients, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ clients, under-housed clients, immigrants, youth, and more.

Implementing inclusive care requires midwives to reflect on how Canada's Eurocentric health system perpetuates harm, how to actively dismantle structural oppression in health, and how to **provide midwifery care that comprehensively meets the needs of all birthing people.**



# Principles of Inclusive Midwifery Care

Inclusive midwifery care involves providing trauma-informed, client-centred, comprehensive, and compassionate care and requires midwives to actively engage in anti-oppressive practices, to practice cultural humility, and to strive towards providing culturally safe and relevant care.

Trauma-  
Informed

Compassionate

Anti-Oppressive

Culturally  
Humble

Culturally Safe  
and Relevant

Client-Centred  
Comprehensive Care

# Diving Deeper: Principles of Inclusive Midwifery Care

## Trauma-Informed

Emphasize social, physical, and emotional safety, informed consent, transparency, and building trust.

## Compassionate

Promote kindness, compassion, respect, acceptance, non-judgment, active listening, and mutual understanding.

## Anti-Oppressive

Challenge oppressive systems, beliefs, behaviors, and barriers. Prioritize accessibility and adaptability.

## Culturally Humble

Encourage reflexivity, self-exploration, self-critique, willingness to learn and change, and dismantle bias.

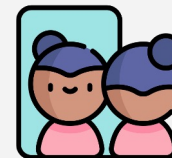
## Culturally Safe and Relevant

Provide care responsive to the client's culture and support holistic well-being.

## Client-centred Comprehensive Care

Deliver comprehensive, individualized, collaborative care that supports clients' needs and desires without expectations.

## 5-Minute Reflection Exercise



**Instructions:** Read and reflect upon the prompt below. Feel free to write your thoughts down.

Reflecting about each of the principles of inclusive midwifery care, where do you believe your strengths lie? Where might you benefit from additional learning and practice?

## How Inclusive Care Enables You to Uphold Human Rights

Human Right	Inclusive Care
Dignity	Inclusive care respects the inherent dignity of every individual by valuing their unique identity, experiences, and preferences without judgment or discrimination.
Autonomy	Inclusive care promotes client autonomy by empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health, birthing experiences, and treatment options.
Non-discrimination	Inclusive care upholds the principle of non-discrimination by providing equitable and respectful services to all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status.
Equity	Inclusive care promotes health equity by addressing systemic barriers and disparities to ensure that all clients have access to comprehensive, culturally safe, and relevant care.
Respect for Cultural Rights	Inclusive care recognizes and respects cultural rights by offering culturally responsive services that honor diverse cultural practices, beliefs, languages, and traditions.
Protection from Harm	Inclusive care prioritizes the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of clients, protecting them from harm, coercion, or discrimination based on their identity.

## **Inclusive Midwifery Care: Case Study**

### Supporting Indigenous Clients' Cultural Rights

#### **CLIENT PROFILE**

- Indigenous individual seeking midwifery care.
- Values traditional practices and ceremonies.

#### **INCLUSIVE CARE APPROACH**

- Midwife collaborates with the client to support them in incorporating cultural traditions into prenatal and postpartum care.
- Midwife respects the client's cultural preferences regarding their desired birthing environment, rituals, and involvement of family members.
- Midwife provides culturally safe and relevant education and resources for the perinatal period acknowledging Indigenous perspectives.

#### **OUTCOME**

- Client feels empowered and respected, enhancing their sense of cultural identity and connection during pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period.
- Promotes trust and strengthens the client-provider relationship, leading to positive birth experiences and improved parental and infant health outcomes.



## Inclusive Midwifery Care: Case Study

### Ensuring Gender Affirming Care for Clients who are Transgender

#### **CLIENT PROFILE**

- Transgender individual seeking midwifery care.
- Requires gender-affirming support and care.

#### **INCLUSIVE CARE APPROACH**

- Midwife uses gender-affirming language and respects the client's gender identity and pronouns throughout.
- Midwife provides comprehensive and inclusive prenatal care that addresses unique health needs of transgender clients.
- Midwife offers to advocate and support the client in accessing gender-affirming health services and resources as needed.

#### **OUTCOME**

- Client feels validated, respected, and supported throughout pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period.
- Reduces stigma and discrimination, promoting better health outcomes and mental well-being for transgender clients.
- Enhances trust and encourages positive experiences in perinatal care.

# Inclusive Midwifery Care: Case Study

## Language and Communication Needs of Clients who are Immigrants

### **CLIENT PROFILE**

- Client who is an immigrant/newcomer with limited English proficiency.
- Requires language support and culturally competent care.

### **INCLUSIVE CARE APPROACH**

- Midwife utilizes professional interpreters or language services to facilitate effective communication with the client.
- Midwife adapts care plans and educational materials to meet the client's language and cultural preferences.
- Midwife shows empathy and respect for the client's immigrant experience and cultural background.

### **OUTCOME**

- Client feels understood, informed, and empowered to make informed decisions about their care.
- Reduces language barriers and promotes equitable access to midwifery services for immigrant populations.
- Fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment, promoting trust and satisfaction in healthcare encounters.

## 3-Minute Reflection Exercise



**Instructions:** Read and reflect upon the prompt below. Feel free to write your thoughts down.

Reflect on the case studies related to Indigenous cultural rights, gender-affirming care for transgender individuals, and language support for clients who are immigrants/newcomers. Is there a particular scenario that resonated with your own experiences providing midwifery care? What are your experiences, and what challenges have you encountered in applying principles of inclusive midwifery care?

## Helpful Points to Remember



- Inclusive Midwifery Care: holistically meets the needs of diverse birthing people, including marginalized populations.
- Key Principles: inclusive midwifery care is trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, compassionate, culturally humble, and client-centred.
- Human Rights Focus: inclusive care in midwifery upholds dignity, autonomy, non-discrimination, equity, cultural rights, and protects people from harm.
- Case Studies: demonstrated how inclusive midwifery promotes culturally responsive care for clients who are Indigenous, transgender, gender nonconforming and immigrant/newcomers.

## Want to continue learning? These resources are for you.



Access midwifery codes of ethics across Canadian provinces/territories:

- [British Columbia](#)
- [Alberta](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [PEI](#)
- [Newfoundland & Labrador](#)
- [Nunavut](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Yukon](#) (Note: applies the BC code of ethics)
- [International Code of Ethics](#) by the International Confederation of Midwives.

## More Resources For You!



- **Birthrights, “Dignity in Childbirth” (data from the Dignity Survey)**  
<https://birthrights.org.uk/campaigns-research/dignity-in-childbirth/>
- **Promoting a Global Culture of Respectful Maternity Care, by Puthussery et al.**  
<https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/counter/pdf/10.1186/s12884-023-06118-y.pdf>
- **Dignity and Respect During Pregnancy and Childbirth: A survey of the experience of disabled women, by Hall et al.**  
[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6088410/pdf/12884\\_2018\\_Article\\_1950.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6088410/pdf/12884_2018_Article_1950.pdf)
- **White Ribbon Alliance, Respectful Maternity Care: The Universal Rights of Women and Newborns**  
[https://whiteribbonalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/WRA\\_RMC\\_Charter\\_FINAL.pdf](https://whiteribbonalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/WRA_RMC_Charter_FINAL.pdf)
- **Statement from the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (includes a Charter for Respectful Maternity Care)**  
[https://cweia.ca/images/CERP\\_Birthing\\_issue\\_statement\\_Oct\\_2018\\_Final1.pdf](https://cweia.ca/images/CERP_Birthing_issue_statement_Oct_2018_Final1.pdf)