

Midwives Working to Full Scope of Training

Introduction

Midwives in Canada are autonomous, primary healthcare providers who provide primary care to client populations with diverse sexual and reproductive health and childbearing needs as well as care to newborns in a variety of practice settings. According to the World Health Organization, midwifery is defined as “skilled, knowledgeable and compassionate care for childbearing women, newborn infants and families across the continuum from pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, birth, postpartum and the early weeks of life”. The International Confederation of Midwives adds that “the midwife has an important task in health counselling and education, not only for the woman, but also within the family and the community. This work should involve antenatal education and preparation for parenthood and may extend to women’s health, sexual or reproductive health and childcare.”

As all provinces and territories grapple with Canada’s health human resource (HHR) crisis, regulated midwives are well-positioned to contribute to the pan-Canadian solutions required to address this crisis, strengthen collaborative relationships with other health care providers, and provide quality care to clients. The sustainability of Canada’s health care system demands the full utilization of all regulated health professionals. All parties are accountable in the practice relationship as determined by their scope of practice, educational background and competence.

Position

Working to full scope of training

It is the position of the Canadian Midwifery Regulators Council (CMRC) that midwives in Canada are well-prepared to safely work to their full scope of training. This means that midwives would not have their scope restricted to pregnant and immediate postpartum clients, but rather apply their full competencies, knowledge, skills and judgment to provide sexual and reproductive healthcare to the general public. This will increase primary care capacity in the system to help achieve improved client outcomes, faster access to care, and a health care system that is more responsive, effective and cost-efficient. CMRC is confident that midwifery regulators can safely regulate midwives working to the full scope of their training.

Harmonization of scope of practice

CMRC sees an opportunity to more safely regulate midwifery by harmonizing midwifery scopes of practice across Canadian jurisdictions which may include expanding the scopes through legislative and regulatory amendments. These changes will stimulate significant gains in advancing access to care, health outcomes and continuity of care. Harmonization of scope of practice also facilitates reciprocity for midwives moving between Canadian jurisdictions.

Conclusion

Midwifery regulators protect the public by ensuring that midwives provide safe and competent care. CMRC trusts that public safety – particularly during this HHR crisis – could be enhanced by midwives using their knowledge, skills and judgment to provide sexual and reproductive healthcare to the general public. CMRC members are prepared to work together to support regulating midwives in this regard, as

the sustainability of Canada's health care system demands the full utilization of all regulated health professionals.

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