

PHILOSOPHY OF MIDWIFERY CARE

Midwifery care is based on a respect for pregnancy as a state of health, and childbirth as a normal physiological process. The practice of midwifery is founded on the understanding that pregnancy, labour and birth are profound experiences which carry significant meaning for a woman, her family* and her community. Midwives strive to enhance these life experiences, providing continuity of care within a relationship of mutual respect with a woman and her family.

Midwives promote decision-making as a shared responsibility between the woman, her family and her caregivers, by providing relevant, objective information and counselling to facilitate informed choice. The mother is recognized as the primary decision-maker. Midwives respect a woman's right to choice of care, caregiver and place of birth. Fundamental to midwifery care is the understanding that a woman's caregiver respect and support her so that she may give birth safely, with power and dignity.

Midwifery is traditionally holistic, combining an understanding of the social, emotional, cultural, spiritual, psychological and physical aspects of a woman's reproductive experience. Midwives promote wellness in women, babies and families, both as autonomous practitioners and in collaboration with other health care providers. With midwifery care, the woman is the centre of the childbirth experience and a great influence on the health and well-being of herself and her family. The practice of midwifery is based on the individual, recognizing each woman's unique strengths and needs. Midwifery care promotes self-care, growth, awareness and confidence and is delivered in a manner that is flexible, creative, empowering and supportive.

*"family" in this document means "as defined by the woman"