

## STANDARD ON SUPPORTIVE CARE

### Background

A midwife may provide supportive care when another health care professional is the primary caregiver. Because a midwife must continue to meet her annual active practice requirements for births attended as a primary midwife, supportive care can make up only a small portion of a midwife's annual caseload. These provisions for supportive care are consistent with the principles of continuity of care and enable the midwife to resume primary care if and when it becomes appropriate.

### Definition

A midwife in a supportive care role works collaboratively with the physician/nurse team within her scope of practice. This can include education, counseling, advocacy, labour support and assistance with infant feeding. Any clinical care provided by the midwife after transfer of care occurs will be discussed and mutually agreed upon by the physician and midwife.

Supportive care occurs after a transfer of care has taken place. This can occur at any time during a woman's course of care, i.e during the pregnancy, labour, birth or postpartum period.

After the birth has occurred the midwife may provide primary care to the healthy newborn. Primary care responsibility for the mother may also be transferred back to the midwife after the birth, or the midwife may continue to provide supportive care to either the mother or the newborn, should specialist care continue to be required. Communication between physician and midwife will be documented.

### Responsibilities of the Midwife in a Supportive Care Role

1. Discussion with the woman: The midwife informs the woman that a transfer of care has occurred, who her primary caregiver is, the changing role of the midwife and discusses with the woman her wishes regarding further involvement of the midwife in her care.
2. Discussion with involved caregivers: All involved caregivers must know who the primary caregiver is at any point in time.
3. Documentation: Clear documentation of the midwife's role must be included in the client's record. When there is a transfer of care between a midwife and another primary caregiver, it should be clearly documented in the client record. The midwife is responsible to record only the care she provides.

### References

College of Midwives of British Columbia. (1997). *Supportive Care Policy*.

College of Midwives of Ontario. (1994). *Supportive Care*.