

The Association of Texas Midwives Code for Ethical Midwifery Practice

The Association of Texas Midwives was established, in part, to further the goal of safe midwifery care in Texas. The adoption of a code of ethics is one way of achieving that goal. The purpose of this document is to provide midwives with a reference point from which to reflect on the conduct of themselves and others. This code should act as a guide for ethical decision-making and midwifery practice.

Additionally, the observance of ethical standards increases an awareness of midwifery, by both current and future practitioners, as a unique calling, responsive to the needs of birthing women.

Finally, articulation of ethical standards is essential to the recognition of midwifery as a profession by the broader society. Adherence to the Code for Ethical Midwifery Practice by midwives will allow other practitioners, clients of midwifery and her family members, and other professions to clearly understand the ethical values they can expect midwives to uphold.

For these reasons, the Association of Texas Midwives set forth the following
CODE FOR ETHICAL MIDWIFERY PRACTICE.

A. CLIENT RIGHTS

An ethical midwife will respect the personal rights of her clients, including:

1. The right to be treated with respect and dignity without reference to, marital status, socioeconomic, ethnicity, political affiliation, religious or sexual orientation.
2. The right to use informed choice in her care, by having access to relevant information upon which to base decisions.
3. The right to freedom from coercion in decision making.
4. The right to accept or to refuse treatment.
5. The right to full disclosure of financial factors involved in her care.
6. The right to know who will participate in her care and to obtain additional consultation of her choice.
7. The right not to be abandoned, neglected, or discharged from care without opportunity to find other care.
8. The right to absolute privacy except where this right is preempted by law.

B. MIDWIFE RIGHTS

A midwife respects her own rights as a care provider, including:

1. The right to refuse care to clients with whom no midwife/client relationship has been established.
2. The right to discharge clients from her care provided adequate legal notice and referral to other care is extended.
3. The right to receive honest, relevant information from clients upon which to base care.
4. The right to receive reasonable compensation for services rendered.

C. MIDWIFE RESPONSIBILITIES

A midwife recognizes certain obligations and responsibilities which are intrinsic to ethical midwifery practice, including:

1. The obligation to serve as the guardian of normal birth, alert to possible complications, but always on guard against arbitrary interference in the birthing process for the sake of convenience.
2. The obligation to honor the confidence of those encountered in the course of midwifery practice and to regard everything seen and heard as inviolable, remembering always that a midwife's highest loyalties are owed to the client, to the profession of midwifery..
3. The obligation to provide complete, accurate and relevant information to the client so that she can make informed choices regarding her health care.
4. The obligation, when referring a client to another health care provider, is to remain responsible for the client until she is either discharged or formally transferred.
5. Midwives will avoid gossiping, bullying, misrepresenting or otherwise tarnishing the name of another midwife.
6. The responsibility to endeavor to develop and utilize a safe and efficient mechanism for medical consultation, collaboration and referral.
7. The obligation to continue professional development through ongoing evaluation of knowledge and skills, and continuing education, including diligent study of all subjects relevant to midwifery practice.

8. The obligation to know and comply with all legal requirements related to midwifery practice within the state of Texas, and to work within the law to provide for the unobstructed practice of midwifery within the state.
9. The responsibility to maintain accountability for all midwifery care delivered under her supervision. Assignment and delegation of duties to other midwives or apprentices should be equal to their educational preparation and demonstrated proficiency.
10. The obligation to accurately document and maintain records of the client's history, condition, physical progress and other vital information obtained during client care.

D. UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Conduct by a midwife which is likely to deceive, defraud, or injure clients, or which results from conscious disregard for the health and welfare of the client under the midwife's care, includes:

1. Knowingly or consistently failing to accurately document a client's condition, responses, progress, or other information obtained during care. This includes failing to make entries, destroying entries, or making false entries in records pertaining to midwifery care.
2. Performing or attempting to perform midwifery techniques or procedures in which the midwife is untrained by education and experience.
3. Failing to give care in a reasonable and professional manner, including maintaining a client load which does not allow for personalized care by the primary attendant.
4. Leaving a client intrapartum without properly terminating care and ensuring adequate care for the mother and infant (abandonment).
5. Delegation of midwifery care or responsibilities to a person who lacks the ability or knowledge to perform the function or responsibility in question.
6. Manipulating or affecting a client's decisions by withholding or misrepresenting information, in violation of the client's right to make informed choices in her health care.
7. Failure to report to the applicable state board or the appropriate authority in the Association, within a reasonable time, the occurrence of any violation of any legal or professional code.

E. VIOLATIONS

1. Violations of this Code should be reported to the Association for review. Findings from this review will be used to assist the midwife in improving her practice, and to restrict incompetent practitioners if necessary.