

Section: **Professional Practice**

Section Number: **IV**

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Subject: **Supportive Care**

Issued: **November 2019**

Revised: **December 2024**

Distribution: **All Employees, Members & Colleagues**

Approved: **Transitional Council**

November 2019

February 2025

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

A midwife may provide supportive care when another health care professional is the primary caregiver. Supportive care should 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.

GUIDELINE

A midwife in a supportive care role works collaboratively with the health care team within the midwifery scope of practice. This can include, but is not limited to, 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 client'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 client may also be transferred back to the midwife after the birth, or the midwife may continue to provide supportive care to either the client or the newborn, should specialist care continue to be required. Communication between physician and midwife will be documented.

The midwife shall ensure that all those involved in the client's/newborn's care are aware of who the primary caregiver is at any given point.

- Discussion with the client: The midwife informs the client that a transfer of care has occurred, explains who the primary caregiver is, outlines the evolving role of the midwife and discusses the client's preferences regarding continued involvement of the midwife in their care.
- Discussion with involved caregivers: All involved caregivers must know who the primary caregiver is at any point in time.
- 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 Manitoba (2007), *Standard on Supportive Care*
College of Midwives of British Columbia. (2018), *Supportive Care Policy*