

FOR BCCNM REGISTERED MIDWIVES

Policy for required procedures for midwife- or client-initiated termination of care

Preamble

In rare occasions, a midwife or client may need to terminate care prior to the natural end of the midwifery-client relationship. Reasons for terminating care include but are not limited to: a midwifery practice unexpectedly closing, an irreconcilable breakdown in the midwife-client relationship, or a client request for care outside of midwifery standards¹ that the midwife cannot accommodate. This policy outlines the regulatory requirements of midwives when terminating care or receiving notice of care termination from a client.

Policy

If the midwife decides to terminate care, either prenatally or during the postpartum period, the midwife must:

1. inform the client of being unable to continue to provide midwifery care, provide a reasonable period of notice for the client to find alternate care (e.g. ten days to two weeks of notice, ideally in pregnancy prior to 37 weeks gestation, however, this may vary according to location and circumstances) and make a reasonable attempt to assist the client to find appropriate alternate care;
2. follow-up immediately with a hand delivered or registered letter, or an alternative appropriate form of communication to the client, confirming termination of care by a date which provides the client with a sufficient amount of time to find another caregiver;
3. continue to provide care within scope to the client for regularly scheduled visits during the notice period unless the client declines care;

¹ Refer to the Policy on *Requests for Care Outside Standards*

4. transfer care as soon as the client has identified a named caregiver who has agreed to assume responsibility for care, providing a copy of the client's health record to the new care provider upon transfer or directly to the client to bring to the first visit with the new care provider;
5. if the client has not identified a caregiver by the end of the notice period, the midwife may transfer care to an obstetrician, family physician or midwife who has agreed to take the client into care and who is appropriate to provide care suitable to the client's risk status, or a care facility or service if specific care providers cannot be identified. The midwife must notify the client that the care and records have been transferred, and provide contact information for the new provider(s) or service;
6. maintain in the client's health record a copy of the letter and/or the alternative form of communication notifying the client that care is being terminated, together with the proof of receipt, as well as a record of all care provided during the notice period;
7. provide an updated version of the PSBC Antenatal Records 1 and 2 to the referring local hospital if termination has taken place prenatally. This is in addition to the requirement of sending the 20 week and 36 week Antenatal Records 1 and 2 to the local hospital;
8. waive any fees that would typically be charged for transferring records to a new provider.

If the client decides to terminate care with the midwife, the midwife should:

1. record the termination of care and the reason given, if any, in the client's health record;
2. provide the client with a copy of their medical records to take to the new provider or release a copy of the client's medical record to the new caregiver if that provider sends a request for a copy of the client's health records signed by the client;
3. if a client terminates care with the midwife and does not provide the midwife with a named caregiver who will assume responsibility for care, the midwife should notify the hospital if it is a prenatal termination and/or notify public health if it is a postpartum termination and transfer the client's records to the client's family physician if possible.

The British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives' *Code of Ethics* and *Standards of Practice* state that "midwives shall never abandon care of a client in labour". Accordingly, should a midwife wish to terminate care with a client during pregnancy, the steps for termination of care (as above) **must** be completed prior to the onset of labour so that the client is no longer the client of the midwife. If these steps have not been taken and the client calls in labour, the midwife has a responsibility to attend the client in labour and continue to provide care.

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