

GUIDELINE ON DISCONTINUING CARE WITH A CLIENT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to identify issues to consider before discontinuing care of a client. The guideline does not provide advice on when or if it is appropriate to discontinue care of a client.

BACKGROUND

For the majority of clients, the experience of midwifery care is professional and satisfying. In rare circumstances midwifery care may need to end. When challenges arise, there are frequently opportunities for resolution or reconciliation. This may involve improved communication. The decision to discontinue care must come only at the conclusion of efforts to resolve the issue. Once efforts to resolve the issue have been exhausted, a midwife may be in a position of needing to end midwifery care. This must be done professionally, with sensitivity and clear communication as well as careful documentation.

The provision of midwifery care is subject to the [Manitoba Human Rights Code](#) and must be delivered without prejudice or discrimination. Discontinuing care of a client based on any prohibited ground in the Human Rights Code may lead to an allegation of discrimination, which could lead to a proceeding before the Human Rights Tribunal, as well as disciplinary action before the College.

GUIDANCE/KEY ISSUES

- In order to be prepared for these instances, practices are advised to establish ways to support midwives in the process of deciding whether or not to terminate care. As well, practices may wish to review the policies and procedures in place to manage such a situation before it arises.
- Follow appropriate reporting within the RHA. (eg. Management).
- Consult key stakeholders with the appropriate responsibility, training and skills to respond to the issue. (eg. Ethics, Patient relations, community hospital).
- Ensure the midwifery practice has access to and follows respectful workplace policies.
- Consider changing the care team – either another group of midwives, shared care with a physician or transfer care to an obstetric team.
- Prepare a written plan for the client and midwife (or midwives, if applicable) to address any issues or repair trust, include a review of the success of that plan, and consider a contingency plan.
- Share the plan at a meeting with the client, face-to-face.
- Follow-up in writing with the client.
- Address potential urgency of the situation (eg. proximity to due date).

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DOCUMENTATION

When care is discontinued documentation is paramount.

- Record all discussions with the client and clinical consultations in the client record.
- When the client is notified of the decision to discontinue care,
 - Notify the client in-person where possible
 - Be prepared for the conversation with the client; be clear and consistent in your message.
 - Provide written confirmation of the reasons and date of discontinuation of care
 - Provide the client with a specific amount of time to find an alternate caregiver, if this has not already been arranged.
- If care is discontinued midwives must provide the client with a copy of their records and a Client Evaluation of Midwifery Care form.
- If care is being discontinued due to a client requesting care outside the standards of practice of a midwife refer to the Standard for when the Client Requests Care Outside the Midwifery Standards of Practice.

Midwives have a fiduciary responsibility to their clients; maintaining professionalism in the face of difficult situations. Understanding the difference between a difficult situation and one that is unsafe is the duty of the midwife. Supporting a safe and satisfactory environment for all clients is in everyone's best interest.