

## **POLICY FOR SECOND BIRTH ATTENDANTS**

### **PREAMBLE**

As per Standard 8.1 of the College of Midwives of British Columbia's (CMBC's) *Standards of Practice*, midwives must ensure "that a second midwife or qualified second birth attendant assists at every birth." The purpose of this policy is to further define who may be considered qualified as a second birth attendant for home births and the roles, responsibilities and expected duties of a second birth attendant. This policy also defines the eligibility requirements and responsibilities of midwives interested in working with second birth attendants at home births.

### **POLICY**

#### **Second Birth Attendant Eligibility Criteria**

The following individuals are considered qualified as second birth attendants at home births so long as they hold current certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation<sup>1</sup> (CPR), annual certification in neonatal resuscitation<sup>2</sup> (NRP), have obtained criminal record check clearance within the last five years and are in good standing with their regulatory/licensing body (where applicable):

- Physicians;
- Registered nurses;
- Nurse practitioners;
- Licensed practical nurses;
- Emergency medical responders or paramedics;
- Respiratory therapists;
- Non-practising registered midwives with no limits or conditions on their registration;
- Graduates of recognized midwifery education programs within the current registration year, who have not yet registered with CMBC;
- Senior midwifery students from recognized midwifery education programs; and/or
- Any other regulated or licensed health care providers within BC who provide NRP as a part of their professional role.

#### **Working with a Second Birth Attendant at Home Births**

##### ***Principal Midwife's Eligibility***

Only General or Temporary registrants, with no limits or conditions on their registration and who have been registered in BC or another regulated Canadian province or territory for a minimum of six months<sup>3</sup>, may attend home births with a second birth attendant.

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<sup>1</sup> Should an emergency situation be declared by the Registrar, CPR requirements are waived for SBAs.

<sup>2</sup> Should an emergency situation be declared by the Registrar, NRP certification must be current within the previous three years for SBAs.

<sup>3</sup> Restrictions apply: refer to the *Policy on New Registrant Requirements* for details.

## ***Principal Midwife's Responsibilities***

It is the responsibility of the principal midwife attending a home birth with a second birth attendant to ensure that:

1. The second birth attendant has current certification CPR<sup>4</sup> (at a level appropriate for health care providers) and annual certification in NRP<sup>5</sup>.
2. The second birth attendant is in good standing with their regulatory/licensing body during the time that the midwife calls upon them to provide second attendant support at births.
3. The second birth attendant has obtained criminal record clearance in the five years prior to the time that the midwife calls upon them to provide second attendant support at births.
4. The second birth attendant is knowledgeable and competent in the following:
  - assessment of vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, temperature, respirations);
  - postpartum assessment of uterine tone and position, and blood loss;
  - universal precautions and assisting with clean and sterile procedures;
  - basic knowledge of labour and birth;
  - basic knowledge of instruments, supplies and drugs used by midwives;
  - appropriate record keeping;
  - providing appropriate assistance in the management of neonatal and obstetric emergencies; and
  - basic knowledge and understanding of midwifery model, scope and practice in B.C. and the midwife's practice protocols.
5. The second birth attendant is aware and oriented to their role, responsibilities and duties as outlined below.

## ***Role and Responsibilities of a Second Birth Attendant***

Restricted activities must not be delegated by a midwife to a second birth attendant who is not otherwise legally authorized under the *Health Professions Act* and their own profession's regulation to perform those activities. The midwife may only ask a second birth attendant to provide client care within the second birth attendant's scope of practice and must not ask the second birth attendant to take primary care responsibility for a client in active labour. All care provided by a second birth attendant must be carried out under the direct supervision of the midwife. The principal midwife must be present at the birth with a second birth attendant and is fully responsible for decision-making and any care that the second attendant provides.

The second birth attendant is expected to be present with the principal midwife for the second and third stage of labour and until both maternal and newborn clients are stable in the

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<sup>5</sup> Should an emergency situation be declared by the Registrar, NRP certification must be current within the previous three years for SBAs.

immediate postpartum. At the discretion of the principal midwife in attendance, a second birth attendant may be asked to be present prior to the second stage of labour.

A written agreement between the midwife and the second birth attendant outlining roles and responsibilities should be maintained by each midwife or group of midwives working with that second birth attendant. In particular, the second birth attendant's role in situations such as precipitous delivery, hemorrhage, infant resuscitation, meconium-stained amniotic fluid and shoulder dystocia should be clearly agreed upon ahead of time and routinely reviewed.

Midwives should be aware of how their professional liability insurance coverage may be impacted by working with second birth attendants.

### ***Duties of a Second Birth Attendant***

During the late first stage or second stage of labour:

- Provide assistance to the midwife;
- Provide support to the client;
- Check layout of supplies to ensure accessibility of drugs and instruments;
- Auscultate, record and report the fetal heart rate to the midwife;
- Check, record and report maternal blood pressure and pulse to the midwife; and
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

During birth:

- Provide assistance to the midwife;
- Ensure warmth and safety of the newborn;
- Check, record and report the condition of the newborn to the midwife; and
- Document in the medical record at the direction of the midwife.

Postpartum:

- Provide assistance to the midwife;
- Provide support and assistance to the client;
- Check, record and report maternal blood pressure, pulse, fundus and lochia to the midwife; and
- Document in the medical record at the direction of the midwife.

In an emergency situation:

- Phone Emergency Medical Services;
- Assist the midwife with NRP;
- Assist the midwife in setting up intravenous fluid/drug therapy for postpartum haemorrhage;
- Check maternal, fetal or newborn vital signs and report to the midwife;
- Assist the midwife with CPR;
- Assist the midwife in the management of other emergency situations;
- Assist in preparation for transport; and
- Document in the medical record at the direction of the midwife.