

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES INCORPORATED



Competency Standards for Midwives

ACMI COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR MIDWIVES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian College of Midwives Incorporated (ACMI) Competency Standards for Midwives have been developed for all midwives. These are core competency standards that all midwives must meet. The Australian Nursing Council Incorporated (ANCI) National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse (2000) must be met if the midwife also practices as a nurse.

It is intended that the ACMI Competency Standards for Midwives be broad, allowing for flexible application according to the legislation governing midwives' practice, and the philosophy, context and level of practice. The performance criteria included in this document are the minimum expected for midwifery practice. Midwifery education and practice facilities may develop additional performance criteria to address the specificities of practice.

It is intended that the competencies should be reviewed in five years, as they are deemed appropriate until that time.

2. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Clinical decision making process
A problem solving approach used in midwifery practice, which encompass the phases of: assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation. Problem solving is synonymous with clinical decision making and used to identify needs and resources as well as problems.

Competency

A competency is a combination of attributes (knowledge, skill and attitude), which result in effective performance.

Competency

standard

Competency standards of practice set by the profession for its members and society. The ACMI competency standards are behaviours or practices for which midwives are accountable, and serve as benchmarks for practice.

Holistic

Refers to all dimensions of care: psychological, social, physical, spiritual, sexual and cultural, and the context in which care is delivered.

Knowledge

Refers to both objective and subjective knowledge. Objective knowledge includes information gained through the senses, which can be seen and measured. Subjective knowledge includes individuals' perceptions, feelings and intuition.

Midwife

The term 'midwife' refers to a person who meets the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) Definition of a Midwife (1992) and who practices within the ACMI Code of Ethics (2001), the ACMI Competency Standards for Midwives (2001) and state/territory applicable Codes of Practice for Midwives.

Performance

criteria

Performance criteria are a concrete example of the activity to demonstrate the competency or behaviour. The performance criteria included in this document are examples only and are not an exhaustive list.

Woman

The term is used to refer to the primary recipient of midwifery care. It includes where appropriate the woman's infant (born or unborn), her partner and significant others.

Woman - centered care

In midwifery practice woman - centred care is a concept that implies that the primary focus of care is on the woman's individual and unique needs, expectations and aspirations.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENT UNDERPINNING THE MIDWIFERY COMPETENCIES

The midwife forms a partnership with the woman as she experiences the life process of childbearing. This begins with preparation and decision - making for childbirth, and includes the care of the woman pre - pregnancy and during all phases of childbearing and early parenting. The focus of midwifery care is the woman herself. Midwifery care incorporates the inclusion of the family, and where possible those considered significant to the woman.

Valuing women is elemental to midwifery. This includes recognising women's identified needs for choice, control and continuity of care throughout their experience of childbirth. Childbirth is viewed as a normal life event that has profound short - term and long - term consequences for women, their families and communities.

The nature and scope of the midwife's practice is influenced by many factors. The midwife is required to have appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, in order to provide safe and satisfying care within a woman - centred framework. Midwifery is a profession in its own right and

"The midwife is the most appropriate and cost-effective type of health care provider to be assigned the care of normal pregnancy and normal birth, including risk assessment and the recognition of complications. (World Health Organisation 1996)- WHO (1996) Care in Normal Birth: a Practical Guide. Geneva, Maternal and Newborn Health/Safe Motherhood Unit. Family and Reproductive Health. World Health Organisation.

The midwife collaborates and consults with other health care professionals throughout the continuum of the childbearing phase. Nurses entering midwifery, while deemed competent in nursing, will be expected to develop and demonstrate competency in midwifery as part of a formal education program.

The practice of midwifery is both an art and a science, and occurs within a social, cultural, ethical, scientific, political and legislative context. The midwife reflects on the art and science of midwifery, and shares the outcome of this reflection with women and colleagues. The midwife demonstrates an evidence-based approach to midwifery practice and education.

4. COMPETENCY STANDARDS

The ACMI Competency Standards for Midwives (2001) are located within four elements of practice: Professional Responsibility and Accountability, Midwifery Practice, Health Education and promotion, and Legislation, Policies and Procedures.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Practices according to the ACMI Code of Practice and the ACMI Code of Ethics.

Performance criteria:

- Respects the rights, needs and expectations of the childbearing woman
- Facilitates woman-centred decision-making within an ethical framework
- Provides accurate information to enable the woman to make informed decisions
- Maintains confidentiality
- Respects the decisions made by the woman regarding childbirth
- Acts according to own clinical judgement (and within statutory and common law affecting midwifery practice) when the woman's decision contravenes safe practice
- Respects cultural diversity of childbearing women
- Demonstrates midwifery practice based on respect for the values and rights of women, self and colleagues

2. Participates actively in the professional and personal development of self and colleagues

Performance criteria:

- Reflects on self and practice to identify areas for personal and professional growth
- Facilitates opportunities for learning of colleagues
- Provides evidence of own continuing education
- Articulates professionally accepted standards of practice to assess the performance of self and others
- Demonstrates supportive behaviours for colleagues, such as: acts as a role model; facilitates debriefing; participates in conflict resolution

3. Promotes the role and function of the midwife within the professional and wider communities.

Performance criteria:

- Communicates to women and other health professionals the role and function of the midwife
- Promotes the professional image of midwives to other health care disciplines and the wider community

- Participates in policy development in relation to the provision of midwifery services

4. Participates in the professional activities of midwifery and other related Groups

Performance criteria:

- Seeks membership of midwifery professional organisations and related groups
- Takes an active role in representing midwifery on relevant committees and working parties
- Establishes and maintains collegial links with other health professionals

MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

5. Demonstrates evidence - based knowledge for midwifery practice

Performance criteria:

- Applies latest available evidence-based knowledge to midwifery practice
- Makes a clinical judgement that demonstrates evidence-based knowledge
- Adapts practice according to evidence - based midwifery practice

6. Provides safe care to the woman and her baby

Performance criteria:

- Articulates own abilities and level of competence to midwifery practice
- Practises within own level of knowledge and skills
- Demonstrates reflection on practice and an understanding of evidence - based midwifery
- Consults with experienced midwives when practice situation outside level of own knowledge and skills
- Uses formal and informal peer review processes to validate and enhance practice
- Collaborates with medical and other health professionals as determined by a woman's needs for care
- Refers the woman to medical or other health professionals when complications or deviations from the normal arise
- Initiates emergency care as required in the absence of an experienced midwife or medical practitioner

7. Creates an environment, which promotes a positive experience of pregnancy, birthing and effective parenting.

Performance criteria:

- Articulates pregnancy, birthing and parenting as a normal life cycle social event
- In partnership with the woman, utilises appropriate strategies to enhance normal pregnancy, birthing and parenting
- Supports the woman's identified needs and expectations within the bounds of safety
- Adapts strategies for care in consultation and partnership with the woman when complications or special needs arise
- Demonstrates appropriate support of the woman during pregnancy, birthing and early parenting
- Advocates for a midwifery model of care for women anticipating uncomplicated pregnancy and birth
- Endeavours to create an environment aesthetically pleasing and acceptable to the woman

8. Protects the women's right to privacy and dignity in all settings where midwifery is practiced.

Performance criteria

- Promotes the woman's self worth, self confidence and self abilities
- Respects the nature of the relationship between the midwife and the woman
- Supports the woman's right to see her own health record

9. Facilitates empowerment of the woman through effective and therapeutic interpersonal communication

Performance criteria:

- Provides the opportunity for the woman to express her feelings, thoughts and needs
- Creates an environment which fosters communication between the midwife and the woman and engages in effective primary level counselling as required
- Offers support to enable the woman to feel in control during her pregnancy, birthing and early parenting experience
- Acts as the woman's advocate

10. Utilize a clinical decision making approach to provide holistic midwifery care

Performance criteria:

- Performs a comprehensive and accurate midwifery assessment, including the assessment of the woman's individual lifestyle pattern
- Formulates clinical judgements and prioritises care

- Develops a plan of care in partnership with the woman and in accordance with the woman's spiritual and cultural specificities
- Implements planned care
- Applies principles of woman- centred care
- Evaluates the woman's progress towards agreed outcomes
- Modifies the plan of care in accordance with evaluation findings and agreed outcomes
- Works in partnership with women

11. Promotes quality outcomes of midwifery care for each woman

Performance criteria:

- Articulates knowledge of quality processes, procedures and outcomes
- Articulates the meaning of midwifery practice
- Promotes continuity of care and continuity of carer/s
- Utilises available resources effectively and efficiently for the delivery of evidence based midwifery care

12. Fulfills the role of the midwife within the multidisciplinary health care team

Performance criteria:

- Adopts a role congruent with the woman's needs
- Articulates the roles and interrelationships of members of the multidisciplinary health care team
- Facilitates access to the services of the health care team as required

HEALTH EDUCATION AND PROMOTION

13. Offers formal and informal education that promotes women's and family health

Performance criteria:

- Incorporates women's views in the development of prenatal birth and early parenting education sessions
- Articulates accurate knowledge of women and family community health support services
- Participates in pre natal education
- Applies the principles of adult learning according to individual needs
- Acts as a resource for accurate information for women and their families

- Encourages the woman to take responsibility for her own health
- Promotes independence of women in achieving optimum health

LEGISLATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

14. Functions in accordance with legislation and common law affecting midwifery practice.

Performance criteria:

- Articulates knowledge of policies and procedures that have legal implications for practice
- Recognises and /or reports potential and/or actual child protection issues/domestic violence according to legislative requirements
- Provides the woman with accurate information to enable her to give informed consent
- Fulfils the duty of care in midwifery practice
- Practices within the parameters of accepted midwifery practice and relevant legislation
- Demonstrates accurate, contemporaneous and appropriate documentation as required by legislation