



Ordre
des Sages-Femmes
du Québec



Professional
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dards Profes

Professional standards (OSFQ) 2021

Adopted by the board of directors on April 12, 2021

Effective as of September 1st 2021

Acknowledgements

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Graphic design: Manon Boulais communication visuelle

Since its establishment in 1999, in recognition of the feminist struggles that have built the profession of midwifery, the Order has used the feminine gender in its writing.

Fundamentally, the profession of midwifery is based on equity for women in the health care system. Our evolving understanding of the unique needs and perspectives of diverse populations in the context of midwifery care includes a new appreciation of the importance of culturally safe and relevant care, and the fact that pregnancy and birth are experiences not necessarily limited to those who identify as women.

Thus, the feminine gender is used in this document and refers to any person as they are.

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ISBN : 978-2-923760-10-0

NOTE: These standards are evolving. The content of this document should be reviewed to reflect changes to the professional practice.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Inclusivity policy	5
Cultural safety – Recognition of Joyce’s Principle	5
Guiding principles	6
Professional standards	7
Be with women	7
Nurture respect and trust	7
Cultivate health	8
Act professionally	9
Glossary	11

Introduction

Primary healthcare services, as defined by the World Health Organization (2018), are at the very heart of the midwife philosophy, through its holistic approach to health and well-being centred on the needs and preferences of individuals, families and communities.

With a feminist concern for self-determination, the midwifery profession in Quebec is rooted in the reappropriation of women's health by women. Midwives recognize that women are the first person responsible for their health.

Midwifery practice is a combination of art and science. The midwife is with the woman, establishing a mutual responsibility in the relationship of trust. This practice is founded on an understanding of the social, emotional, cultural, spiritual, psychological and physical experiences of women, as well as of the data from research surrounding the practice.

The midwife's practice extends to any field where the midwife uses her skills and knowledge. This practice includes clinical and non-clinical relationships with women, as well as roles in education, research, advice, management, administration, regulation and policy development.

The OSFQ supports and oversees midwives in their practice, according to its mission to protect the public and its values. These professional standards are based on the definition of the performance of the profession in the *Midwives Act* and complement the *Code of ethics of midwives*¹, as well as the *Philosophie sage-femme*.²

The professional standards describe the OSFQ's expectations of midwives, regardless of where they work. They are also designed to serve as a reference tool for the quality assurance program committee and the bureau de la syndique of the OSFQ regarding the essential aspects of a high-quality professional practice.

1 Code of ethics of midwives, <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cr/S-0.1,%20r.%205>

2 Philosophie sage-femme (French only). <https://www.osfq.org/fr/ordre>

Inclusivity policy

For the OSFQ, accessibility and quality of services and care are indivisible, because equity in health is a fundamental principle. The OSFQ affirms the importance of a midwifery practice sensitive to the realities of minorities and people who are marginalized, discriminated against and even stigmatized for different reasons, particularly physical, social, economic or ethnic reasons or sexual orientation. The OSFQ stresses that beyond words and language, it is essential that the practice is guided by an ethic of welcoming and inclusive care for any person who requests the services of a midwife. Each person will be welcomed and treated with dignity and respect for their identity, as they define themselves.³

Cultural safety – Recognition of Joyce’s Principle⁴

Joyce’s Principle aims to guarantee to all Indigenous people the right of equitable access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services, as well as the right to enjoy the best possible physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Joyce’s Principle requires the recognition and respect of Indigenous people’s traditional and living knowledge in all aspects of health.⁵

The OSFQ wants all its members to know and apply Joyce’s Principle on a daily basis in their interactions with Inuit, Métis and First Nations women and families, as well as all their clientele.

Furthermore, midwives must recognize and respect the traditional and living knowledge of Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples, as well as all other people.

inclusivity
policy

3 Excerpt from the OSFQ’s positioning on inclusivity: L’inclusivité chez les sages-femmes (2016) (French only). <https://www.osfq.org/medias/iw/Position-OSFQ-inclusivite-oct2016-FR.pdf>

4 Joyce’s Principle, Brief, 2020, https://principedejoyce.com/sn_uploads/principe/Joyce_s_Principle_brief__Eng.pdf

5 Ibid, p. 10

Guiding principles

The professional standards are rooted in four guiding principles. With protection of the public top of mind, these principles were developed in accordance with the philosophy of midwives in Quebec, as well as with global standards concerning the practice of the midwifery profession.⁶

These principles are supported and linked by the commitment of midwives toward women and their profession.

Nurture
respect and
trust

Cultivate
health

Be with
women

Act
professionally

6 ICM, Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice, <https://www.internationalmidwives.org/our-work/policy-and-practice/essential-competencies-for-midwifery-practice.html> (2018)

Professional standards

Be with women

Midwives commit themselves to a relationship with women, as well as with each woman. The midwifery profession is rooted in the feminist fight for the rights of women to have control over their own bodies and their health care. Midwives practice according to a front-line holistic approach to health, centred on the needs and preferences of women, families and communities.⁷

Midwives:

1. Position themselves in favour of women's rights.
2. Inform and support women in the application of their rights.
3. Adapt to each woman while taking into account her needs to help her achieve her full autonomy and full potential.
4. Contribute to the establishment of an optimal environment around the woman, allowing her to develop her role as mother.
5. Encourage and facilitate the process with the goal of a physiologically normal birth as well as breastfeeding.
6. Are partners in the communities in which they practice.

Nurture respect and trust

Midwives shall, over time and with women and the public, act to nurture trust and respect for maternity.⁸

Midwives

7. Take the measures necessary to establish a relationship of trust with each woman.
8. Encourage each woman to participate in her own maternity .
9. Give women the information available regarding the issues related to the various choices, and their possible implications, to make during the perinatal period.
10. Protect the midwifery approach and make judicious use of the various technologies, tests and screenings in their practice.
11. Recognize the woman as the primary decision maker regarding her own healthcare and that of her baby, and respect the woman's right to follow, or not, any advice and recommendations.⁹

7 Inspired by the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*, section 6.

8 *Ibid*, section 10

9 *Liberté de choix et encadrement professionnel, OSFQ (French only), May 2019.*

- 12. Ensure with goodwill the availability of services, as well as the continuity of the relationship and services, ideally by midwives known to the woman or by the appropriate services.
- 13. Support the woman in the process of deciding where to give birth.
- 14. Promote and support breastfeeding, inform of the risks of not breastfeeding, while respecting the woman's choice of how to feed her newborn.
- 15. Participate, with the woman and her family, in preparing and organizing for motherhood and parenthood.
- 16. Recognize, consider and take into account the professional power imbalance inherent in the midwife-client relationship, in their interactions.

Cultivate health

Midwives commit to work in a culture of women's and public health.¹⁰

Midwives:

- 17. Encourage and support global and environmental health behaviours.
- 18. Obtain the woman's complete health history to determine her condition, as well as that of her unborn baby.
- 19. Educate and inform women and the public with the goal of optimizing health and preventing complications.
- 20. Inform women of their sexual and reproductive health rights.¹¹
- 21. Implement and promote practices conducive to physiology within the family, community and the health system.
- 22. Nurture attachment links between parents, siblings and the newborn.
- 23. Recognize and react appropriately when the safety and quality of the practice may be compromised by a change in their own health or that of their colleagues.¹²

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sional Stand

10 Inspired by the *Professional Code*, section 39.4 and the *Midwives Act*, section 7

11 Inspired by the *Midwives Act*, section 7.

12 Inspired by the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*, section 60.

Act professionally

Midwives shall act wisely in their profession.

Professional responsibility

Midwives

24. Are a model of integrity and leadership, behave so as to nurture public trust in the midwifery profession.¹³
25. Maintain the reputation and values of the profession.
26. Commit to the self-regulation specific to the midwifery practice.¹⁴
27. Know their legal obligations, particularly those under the *Youth Protection Act*.¹⁵
28. Assume and invest in their own professional responsibility.
29. Find the right balance between their own professional responsibility and women's independence.¹⁶
30. Provide safe, competent, goodwilled and empathetic professional services that are evidence-based and informed by their own expertise.¹⁷
31. Maintain a process of reflection recognizing the impact of their personal culture on professional judgment.
32. Inform women of their field of practice.
33. Communicate in appropriate language and make sure they are properly understood.
34. Take the clinical actions appropriate to the situation with the goal of promoting health and preventing complications.
35. Maintain their skills to assist births in the three places of birth.
36. Organize services so that a second midwife or another professional assists them at the birth.
37. Guide women toward local community resources and refer them to other professional health resources, particularly at the end of course of care.
38. Plan and anticipate care and services while taking into account how the situation develops.
39. Optimize communication in their team for the same course of care to ensure continuity in the relationship and care.
40. Understand that they engage their professional responsibility in their use of social media and fulfill their duty to act with restraint.¹⁸

13 Inspired by the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*, section 13.

14 Inspired by the *Midwives Act* and the related regulations, including the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*.

15 Inspired by the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*, section 7.

16 *Liberté de choix et encadrement professionnel, OSFQ (French only), May 2019.*

17 Inspired by the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*, section 5.

18 *Guide de tenue de dossier, OSFQ (French only), 2020, pp. 21-22.*

Professional collaboration

Midwives

- 41. Engage in egalitarian professional relationships and respectful and transparent partnerships.
- 42. Engage in and maintain healthy relationships with their colleagues.
- 43. Participate in and recognize the value of teamwork.
- 44. Collaborate with other disciplines while promoting services centred on the woman, her family and her community.
- 45. Engage consultations and references to other professionals with diligence.¹⁹
- 46. Establish clearly to whom the professional responsibility for care belongs when other professionals are involved in monitoring.
- 47. When care is transferred to another professional, take reasonable measures to ensure support to the woman.²⁰
- 48. Know and use the services of the health network to the benefit of the woman.

Professional Development

Midwives

- 49. Are responsible for their own development.
- 50. Participate in a culture that supports learning, teaching, research and knowledge transfer.²¹
- 51. Maintain a reflective practice process.
- 52. Are responsible for the continuous improvement of the practice, particularly by critically analyzing the development of knowledge.
- 53. Promote the midwifery profession.

¹⁹ Inspired by the *Code of Ethics of Midwives*, section 18.

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*, section 4 and section 66.

Glossary

Physiological/natural birth

Natural or physiologic birth designates giving birth in the healthiest and easiest way possible, through factors that encourage the natural process and by eliminating the factors that impede it.

Natural birth is defined as physiologic labour without anesthesia, unaltered by routine interventions, that ends in spontaneous vaginal delivery. Natural birth is part of a continuum that includes pregnancy, the immediate postnatal period and breastfeeding.

Institut national de santé publique du Québec, [Portail d'information périnatal](#) (French only)

Self-determination

Free choice of one's own acts or states without external compulsion (Merriam Webster)

The ability or power to make decisions for yourself, (...) (Cambridge Dictionary)

Wehmeyer defines self-determination as the abilities and attitudes required in a person allowing them to act directly on their lives by making choices without undue influence from external agents. Being self-determined means knowing how to make choices and decisions. The principle of self-determination is characterized by a person's ability to make choices and act on their own lives, independent of excessive outside influences.

[Guide d'Utilisation de l'Échelle d'Autodétermination pour Adultes du LARIDI](#) (French only)

Informed choice

- Involves making a decision
- The process plays a central role
- Understanding information is important
- The ability to apply the pros/cons to own values is essential.

Free and informed consent

- Manifestation of the express or tacit desire through which a person approves an action that another person must take (CMQ. 2006)
- Involves an obligation to inform the patient

Institut national de santé publique du Québec https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/jasp/archives/2009/10_05_FranceLegare.pdf (French only)

Second Birth Attendant

Professional other than a midwife who works in collaboration with the midwife during the birth.

(College of Ontario Midwives, https://www.cmo.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Second-Birth-Attendant-Standard.Final_October-1.2018.pdf)

Diligence

The rapidity and efficiency with which tasks or activities are accomplished.

[English translation adapted from Termium (https://www.btb.termiumpplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/juridi/index-fra.html?lang=fra&lettr=indx_catlog_d&page=9ea7Ecmz-MmY.html) (French only)]

Integrity

A person with integrity is an individual on whom one can count, whose choice of values are reliable and stable.

The ability of a person to fulfill their commitments and uphold their principles, despite adverse pressure. Integrity is viewed by the legislator as the cornerstone of ethical duties. It involves the concepts of honesty, candour and probity. It is the quality of an upstanding and loyal person. This value transcends all dimensions of the performance of the profession.

[English translation adapted from the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (www.oiiq.org) (French only)]

Leadership

Ability to guide, influence, inspire.

(English translation adapted from Université de Sherbrooke) (<https://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMDictionnaire?iddictionnaire=1619>) (French only)

Wisdom

the ability to use your knowledge and experience to make good decisions and judgments.

(Cambridge Dictionary)

Health

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

(World Health Organization)



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