

# COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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## POLICY FOR SECOND BIRTH ATTENDANTS

It is required that two people trained and current in neonatal resuscitation (NRP) level 1-9 and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) level C for healthcare providers attend each birth according to the *Standards of Practice Policy* of the College of Midwives of BC (CMBC).

The second birth attendant has current training in the following: a) NRP at CMBC's required level (1-9); and b) CPR at CMBC's required level C for healthcare providers<sup>1</sup>.

The ideal assistant to the principal midwife at a birth is another midwife. However, the second midwife or second birth attendant chosen by the principal midwife to assist at a birth will depend on many factors, including the geographic area in which the midwife works or the availability of appropriate professionals in that area.

Use of a second birth attendant who is not a currently practicing registered midwife or a licensed physician<sup>2</sup> must be approved by CMBC. Please refer to "Application Guidelines and Approval Process" below for detailed information on the approval of second birth attendants. Only general registrants or temporary registrants without conditions or limitations on their registration may use second birth attendants approved by CMBC at home births.

Both midwives and physicians have the full scope of practice to function as primary care providers for births in any setting. They must have the competencies in NRP, CPR and emergency skills to practice safely.

Where a midwife works with a second birth attendant who is not a midwife, the midwife is responsible for ensuring that care provided is safe and in accordance with CMBC's *Philosophy of Midwifery Care, Code of Ethics* and *Midwifery Model of Practice*. When midwives work together this responsibility is shared.

The midwife may not delegate restricted activities 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 roles and duties outlined below and this care must be carried out

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<sup>1</sup> The minimum required standard is the designated program of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Basic Life Support (BLS) for Healthcare Providers (Level C). For a list of acceptable certification courses, please refer to CMBC's *Policy on Continuing Competency in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*.

<sup>2</sup> A midwife who is working with a licensed physician in a shared care arrangement approved by CMBC may use that physician as the second care provider at a birth without additional second attendant approval from CMBC because a physician is a part of the primary care team and, as a part of the approval of shared care arrangements, has signed an agreement to provide shared care consistent with the standards outlined in the *Midwifery Model of Practice*. In order to attend a home birth with a physician as a part of an approved shared care arrangement, a midwife must confirm that the physician has current NRP and CPR.

under the direct supervision of the midwife<sup>3</sup>. **A second birth attendant who is not a currently practicing registered midwife or licensed physician may not take primary care responsibility for a client in active labour.**

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

It is the responsibility of the principal midwife attending a birth to ensure that:

1. The second birth attendant has current training in the following:
  - a) NRP at CMBC's required level (1-9); and
  - b) CPR at CMBC's required level (C) for healthcare providers.
2. The second birth attendant is knowledgeable and competent in the following:
  - a) assessment of vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, temperature, respirations);
  - b) postpartum assessment of uterine tone and position, and blood loss;
  - c) body substance precautions and assisting with clean and sterile procedures;
  - d) basic knowledge of labour and birth;
  - e) basic knowledge of instruments, supplies and drugs used by midwives;
  - f) appropriate record keeping ;
  - g) providing appropriate assistance in the management of neonatal and obstetric emergencies<sup>4</sup>; and
  - h) basic knowledge and understanding of midwifery in B.C. and the midwife's practice protocols.

**Potential Second Birth Attendants requiring CMBC approval if a Second Midwife is Unavailable:**

Non-practicing midwife member of CMBC  
Registered Nurse  
Nurse Practitioner  
Licensed Practical Nurse  
Ambulance attendant or paramedic  
Respiratory therapist  
or another appropriately trained person where none of the above attendants are available<sup>5</sup>.

A midwife who is designated as a clinical preceptor for an approved education program may have the senior midwifery student (clerkship<sup>6</sup> or equivalent) under supervision act in the role of second midwife. Approval to have a senior student act in this role for a midwife who is not one of

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<sup>3</sup> The principal midwife must be present at the birth with second birth attendant and is fully responsible for decision-making and any care provided by the second birth attendant.

<sup>4</sup> It is recommended that second birth attendants attend the Midwifery Emergency Skills Program or other emergency skills training with one of the midwives with whom they are working and that midwives and their second birth attendants regularly practice these skills together.

<sup>5</sup> The midwife must submit to CMBC and keep on file documentation of the attempts to obtain second attendant support from an appropriate regulated health professional. Minimally this must include a posting at local hospital for four weeks prior to application for approval of a second attendant who is not one of the listed regulated health professionals.

<sup>6</sup> A student in the clerkship portion of the program of midwifery education is in the final year of the midwifery education. The student has successfully completed certification in Emergency Skills and the program has assessed the student to be competent to provide primary care under direct supervision.

the student's designated preceptors must be obtained from the midwifery education program in which the student is enrolled.

## **RECOMMENDED ROLES AND DUTIES OF A SECOND BIRTH ATTENDANT**

Under the direction of the principal midwife, the second attendant may be requested to:

### 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.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

### 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.
- Assess Apgar scores and report them to the midwife.
- Document in the health care 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.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

### 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.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

The second birth attendant's role in emergency situations such as precipitate delivery, hemorrhage, infant resuscitation, meconium-stained amniotic fluid and shoulder dystocia should be clearly agreed upon ahead of time and routinely reviewed with the midwife. All second birth attendants should take the opportunity to regularly practice emergency skills, consistent with their scope of practice, with the midwives with whom they are working. Certification in emergency skills is strongly recommended.

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.

Midwives should be aware that the use of second birth attendants outside the roles and responsibilities outlined in this policy may affect their professional liability coverage.

## **APPLICATION GUIDELINES AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

1. Only general or temporary registered midwives (who have been registered in BC or another Canadian province or territory for a minimum of three months<sup>7</sup>) can apply for a person to be approved as a second birth attendant. Application must be made by the midwives. CMBC will not accept an application from a proposed second birth attendant directly.
2. The midwife or midwives applying for second birth attendant approval must fully complete the prescribed application form and provide CMBC with the following information about the proposed second attendant(s):
  - a) their health regulatory body membership registration number or a photocopy of their current registration card as proof of registration;
  - b) information taken directly from their current NRP card (annual) verifying CMBC's required levels 1-9 or a photocopy of their current NRP card (the midwife must keep a photocopy of this card on file and make it available to CMBC upon request);
  - c) information taken directly from their current CPR certificate (within the last two years) verifying certification at CMBC's required level<sup>8</sup> or a photocopy of their current CPR certificate (the midwife must keep a photocopy of this certificate on file); and
  - d) if the proposed second birth attendant is a registered nurse trained in and currently practicing as an obstetrical nurse, the name of the hospital where the nurse is currently employed.

Incomplete applications will not be processed by CMBC.

3. Confirmation that the proposed second birth attendant has undergone criminal record clearance in the past five years. All proposed second birth attendants are required to undergo a criminal record check if they have not had a criminal record check arranged through CMBC in the past 5 years, or have a copy of a current criminal record clearance forwarded to CMBC from their health professional regulatory body. Information on obtaining a criminal record check, including the process and fee, will be provided after CMBC receives the application.
4. Second birth attendants from the above list who are regulated health professionals in good standing with their regulatory body may be approved by the Registrar or Deputy Registrar, based on fulfilling the above policy, for a period of up to one year, expiring no later than March 31 of the current registration year. Any concerns about the approval of these second birth attendant applications will be referred to the Approval Panel of the Quality Assurance Committee for review.
5. Requests for approval of "other appropriately trained persons" who are not regulated health professionals will be reviewed and approved by the Approval Panel of the Quality Assurance Committee.

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<sup>7</sup> See *New Registrants Policy*.

<sup>8</sup> The midwife can choose to provide the CPR level C for health care provider certificate information, including date of certification, level of certification and the certifying organization, on the application without submitting a copy of the certification provided that the midwife maintains a copy of the proof on file and can provide the proof to CMBC upon request.

6. Approved second birth attendant arrangements that are not set for a shorter term shall expire on March 31 at the end of the registration year. Reapplication for second birth attendant approval can be made to CMBC. In order to have continuous second attendant coverage, the application must be received by CMBC by March 1. Incomplete applications received after March 1 will be processed by CMBC in April after the annual renewal of midwife registration is completed. To avoid a gap in approved second birth attendant coverage as of April 1, midwives reapplying must ensure that a complete application is received by CMBC by the above deadline.
7. Once the proposed second birth attendant is approved, the midwife or midwives applying or reapplying will be notified. The approved second birth attendant will not receive notification of approval from CMBC directly.
8. The midwife or midwives must orient the approved second birth attendant to the roles and duties as described in this policy and provide the second birth attendant with feedback and evaluation as appropriate. The "Note to an Approved Second Birth Attendant" attached to this policy should be provided to the approved second birth attendant for information and reference.
9. The midwife or midwives are responsible for ensuring that the second birth attendant is in good standing with their regulatory body throughout the period that the midwife or midwives call upon them to provide second attendant support at births and for keeping copies verifying required training on file.

## A NOTE TO AN APPROVED SECOND BIRTH ATTENDANT

You have been approved by CMBC as a second birth attendant. Please note the following:

1. You may perform the following roles and duties for the midwife or midwives who have received the approval to call upon you as second birth attendant at births:

At the direction of the principal midwife:

### a) 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.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

### b) 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.
- Assess Apgar scores and report them to the midwife.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

### c) 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.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

### d) 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 in preparation for transport.
- Document in the health care record at the direction of the midwife.

2. You are expected to be present with the principal midwife for the second and third stage of labour. At the discretion of the principal midwife in attendance, you may be asked to be present prior to the second stage of labour.
3. You may be required to provide support in the role of second birth attendant in emergency situations such as precipitate delivery, hemorrhage, infant resuscitation, meconium-stained amniotic fluid and shoulder dystocia. Emergency management protocols should be clearly established ahead of time and routinely reviewed with the

principal midwife. All second birth attendants should take the opportunity to regularly practice emergency skills consistent with their scope of practice with the support of midwives with whom they work. Certification in emergency skills is strongly recommended.

4. The midwife may not delegate restricted activities beyond what you are otherwise legally authorized as a regulated health professional to perform under the *Health Professions Act* and your own profession's regulation and scope of practice. The midwife may not ask you to provide client care beyond the roles and duties outlined above and all second birth attendant care must be carried out under the direct supervision of the midwife.
5. CMBC requires the midwife to maintain a written agreement with you outlining these roles and responsibilities.

The requirement for NRP levels 1-9 and CPR level C Health Care Providers applies to all second birth attendants according to CMBC's *Standards of Practice Policy*. As a regulated health professional, you must immediately notify the midwife or midwives with whom you are working should your registration status with your regulatory body change.