



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE MIDWIFE

Position statement

BACKGROUND

The ICM Definition of the Midwife states that a midwife must be able to give the necessary care to women during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period and to conduct births on her/his own responsibility.

The ICM Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice make clear that midwives assume responsibility and accountability for their practice, applying up-to-date knowledge and skills, and are responsible and accountable for clinical decisions.

The ICM's International Code of Ethics for Midwives: acknowledges women as persons with human rights, seeks equity in access to health care; recommends that midwives participate in the development and implementation of health policies that promote the health of all women and families; and upholds the need for midwives to understand the adverse consequences that ethical and human rights violations have on the health of women and infants. It also states that, in education, the midwife teacher has an obligation to help students understand what it means to be a moral agent, to practise ethically and to identify, understand and accept the dominant values of the profession of midwifery.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The ICM believes the midwife, as defined in the 'Definition of the Midwife', is accountable for her/his own actions and professional advice. This accountability extends to those actions taken on the advice and orders of others.

POSITION

The ICM recognises that midwives have a duty of care to the women and newborn they attend. For midwives to be accountable for their own actions, each midwife must:

- have acquired the knowledge and skills for competency to carry out those actions as part of a recognised professional education programme
- have the opportunity to access further educational programmes for the regularly updating and expansion of the knowledge and skills that are the basis of competent midwifery practice
- be aware of the obligation not to undertake actions for which she/he has not received the preparation for competency.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

Member Associations are urged to adopt this statement for action in their own environment if no similar statement already exists.

RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

- ICM. Definition of the Midwife. ICM, 2005.
- ICM. International Code of Ethics for Midwives. ICM, 1999.
- ICM. Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice. ICM, 2002

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

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