

Midwives Council of Hong Kong

**Core Competencies for
Registered Midwives**

January 2010
Updated in July 2017

Preamble

Midwives serve the community by meeting the needs of childbearing women. The roles of midwives are evolving as the mode of delivery of maternity services has undergone major changes both locally and internationally in the past decades. In line with international trends, the maternity services developed in Hong Kong provide not only holistic care, but also promote and protect the safety and health of the mother and her infant to enhance the quality of life and human development. Apart from being a formal carer of childbearing women, midwives need to take up other professional roles, such as health promoter, educator, counselor, care coordinator and manager, researcher and client's advocator.

To ensure a regulated practice and to enhance the advancement of midwifery and maternity services, it is essential that the roles of midwives and their professional competencies are clearly defined.

This document has been developed by the Midwives Council of Hong Kong to serve the following purposes:

1. to state the philosophy of midwifery based on which such practice is developed in Hong Kong;
2. to outline the professional roles of midwives and the core-competencies required to fulfill these roles;
3. to delineate a scope of core-competency areas to guide curriculum development of education programs that prepare Registered Midwives (RM) who can practise midwifery and maternity nursing safely, ethically and effectively;
4. to inform the public, the employers and stakeholders locally and internationally of what they may expect from the RM on entry to practice.

This document contains four competence areas. There are general competencies that a RM should possess when she provides midwifery/maternity services to childbearing women from pregnancy till postpartum as well as in the community. To avoid redundancy, these competencies are taken out and grouped under the Competence Area 1: General competencies. They should be read together with the other three competence areas whenever applicable. Competence Area 2 is the professional midwifery practice provided during pregnancy, labour and birth, and puerperium including newborn care. Competence Area 3 concerns about the primary health care and Competence Area 4 is about the professional, ethical and legal aspects of midwifery practice.

These core-competencies should be possessed by the RM on entry to practice. In addition, the RM should practise midwifery in accordance with the Handbook for Midwives and Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Midwives in Hong Kong issued by the Midwives Council of Hong Kong and the Midwives Registration Ordinance, Cap. 162, Laws of Hong Kong. These documents will be subject to constant review in order to ensure the appropriateness and usefulness to reflect the contemporary role and requirements of practising as a RM in Hong Kong.

This document was prepared following consultation with midwives and health care professionals in major local health care organizations, both public and private, midwifery education institutions and midwifery professional bodies.

Glossary of terms

Midwife	A midwife is a person who is registered under Section 8 of the Midwives Registration Ordinance, Cap. 162, Laws of Hong Kong and holds a valid practising certificate.
Family	A small social system in the form of a household, made up of individuals of strong reciprocal affections and loyalties, and with a lasting relationship.
Competence	The combinations of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and abilities that underpin effective performance in a professional area.
Competencies	Attributes of a person which result in effective performance.
Core-competency	The essential competency that a Registered Midwife is expected to possess at entry to practice as an outcome of their midwifery education in order to provide the public with safe, effective and ethical midwifery care.
Holistic care	Refers to all dimensions of care: psychological, social, physical, spiritual, sexual and cultural, and the context in which care is delivered.
Family-centered care	The primary focus of care is on the woman and her family.
Continuity of care	Continuity of care is provided throughout the antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal period.
Informed choice	Providing woman with complete, relevant and objective information in a non-authoritarian manner to facilitate the woman to make her own choice.

Competence Area 1 : General Competencies

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. human anatomy and physiology relevant to childbearing;
2. physical, emotional, psychosocial and spiritual needs of the woman and her family;
3. cultural variations and their influence on childbearing;
4. family-centered care;
5. assessment skills;
6. informed choice for decision making;
7. communication, counseling and teaching skills;
8. maternal and newborn cardiopulmonary resuscitation;
9. common drugs used in obstetrics;
10. principles of infection control;
11. documentation.

Skills

1. assess, plan, provide and evaluate safe and effective midwifery care;
2. provide advice and holistic care to the woman and her family during pregnancy, labour, birth and the postpartum period;
3. identify maternal, fetal or baby's factors which necessitate consultation or referral, and initiate appropriate actions;
4. provide up-to-date information and support the woman with informed choice for decision making and obtain informed consent for midwifery or medical intervention;
5. communicate effectively with the woman and her family;
6. counsel and support the woman and her family whenever necessary;
7. perform basic life support and other emergency measures whenever necessary;
8. initiate the administration of drugs enlisted in the Handbook for Midwives;
9. maintain an environment conducive to health including infection control;
10. establish and maintain comprehensive, relevant and confidential records.

Attitude

1. respect for each woman's emotional, social, cultural and lifestyle needs;
2. caring, empathetic and supportive to the woman and her family in the promotion of family-centered care;
3. encourage involvement of family members in the care of woman;
4. committed to provide evidence-based information and facilitate the woman to make informed choice;
5. concerned about safety in the planning and delivery of care;
6. committed to promote and support continuity of care.

Competence Area 2 : Professional Midwifery Practice

A. Care during pregnancy

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. process of conception;
2. basic fetal development and growth;
3. maternal physiological adaptation and management of common discomforts of pregnancy;
4. diagnosis of pregnancy;
5. establishing the expected date of confinement;
6. psychosocial and cultural aspects of pregnancy;
7. nutritional requirements during pregnancy;
8. maintenance of healthy lifestyle in pregnancy;
9. antenatal care and examinations;
10. antenatal screening and diagnostic tests used during pregnancy;
11. indicators of normal pregnancy and conditions deviated from normal, including common complications and emergencies, and the respective management;
12. preparation for labour and birth;
13. breastfeeding;
14. parenthood;
15. local maternity services and care options available.

Skills

1. obtain comprehensive health history;
2. perform physical examination for the woman;
3. perform abdominal examination for the woman;
4. interpret the results of antenatal screening tests and routine investigations;
5. assess and monitor maternal and fetal well-being and the progress of pregnancy;
6. assess maternal nutritional status and its relationship to fetal growth, and give appropriate advice when required;
7. advise and manage common discomforts of pregnancy;
8. recognize common abnormalities and emergencies, and initiate appropriate actions;
9. educate and counsel the woman with special needs;
10. provide antenatal education regarding antenatal, labour, postnatal and newborn care;
11. promote and support breastfeeding.

B. Care during labour and birth

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. maternal and fetal anatomy related to progress of labour;
2. maternal and fetal physiological adaptation to labour and birth;
3. psychosocial and cultural aspects of labour and birth;
4. normal labour progress and the use of partograph;
5. maternal and fetal assessments during labour;
6. pain relief in labour;
7. midwifery management of vaginal birth;
8. immediate newborn care and assessment;

9. principles of neonatal resuscitation;
10. early initiation of breastfeeding and bonding;
11. intrapartum conditions that are deviated from normal, including common complications and emergencies and the respective management.

Skills

1. obtain relevant health history;
2. assess and monitor maternal and fetal conditions during the intrapartum period;
3. perform abdominal/vaginal examination to follow the labour progress using the partograph or similar tool for recording;
4. provide support and care to the woman and her family in the intrapartum period;
5. provide/assist in pain relief in labour;
6. conduct spontaneous vaginal birth;
7. perform episiotomy and perineal repair when necessary;
8. assist in operative deliveries;
9. perform initial steps in neonatal resuscitation if indicated;
10. initiate measures to promote maternal and newborn bonding;
11. support early initiation of breastfeeding;
12. recognize common intrapartum abnormalities and emergencies, and initiate appropriate actions.

C. Care during puerperium

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. maternal physiological and role adaptation in postpartum period;
2. psychosocial and cultural aspects of the puerperium;
3. nutritional requirements of the woman during postpartum period and lactation;
4. principles of effective breastfeeding;
5. common breastfeeding problems and its management;
6. postnatal care and examinations;
7. common discomforts in postnatal period and the respective management;
8. common postpartum conditions that are deviated from normal including complications and emergencies and the respective management;
9. postpartum mood disorders and its management.

Skills

1. obtain relevant health history;
2. assess and monitor maternal condition in the postpartum period;
3. provide support and care to the woman and her family in the postpartum period;
4. promote parent-infant bonding;
5. educate the woman and her family regarding self care and infant care;
6. facilitate and support the choice of infant feeding;
7. assist the mother to establish and sustain breastfeeding;
8. advise and manage the common discomforts in the postpartum period;
9. counsel the postpartum woman/family on sexuality and family planning;
10. recognize common postpartum abnormalities and emergencies, and initiate appropriate actions;
11. recognize postpartum mood disorders and initiate appropriate actions.

D. Care of the newborn (up to 6 weeks of age)

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. neonatal physiological adaptation;
2. examination of the newborn;
3. physical, emotional and nutritional needs of the newborn;
4. growth and development of the newborn;
5. routine neonatal screening tests;
6. common neonatal problems and the respective management.

Skills

1. support the newborn's transition to extra-uterine life following birth;
2. perform newborn examination;
3. perform ongoing assessment of the newborn in the postpartum period;
4. provide physical, nutritional and emotional care to newborn;
5. educate and support parents in providing care to the baby;
6. recognize common neonatal abnormalities and emergencies, and initiate appropriate actions.

Competence Area 3 : Primary Health Care

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. human sexuality;
2. family structure and function;
3. pre-conception care;
4. family planning and the use of contraceptive methods;
5. common endemic sexually transmitted diseases;
6. psychosocial issues of the woman at reproductive age;
7. social issues in breastfeeding;
8. Hong Kong childhood immunization;
9. health and social resources in the community;
10. vital statistics in maternity care;
11. health promotion and health education.

Skills

1. provide information and counseling the parent-to-be on pre-conception care to facilitate health and promote healthy behaviors;
2. identify and provide information on health and environmental factors that have an effect on the outcome of pregnancy to the woman and her family;
3. educate and counsel the woman and her family on family planning and various contraceptive methods;
4. identify signs and symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases and make appropriate referrals;
5. identify psychosocial needs of the woman at reproductive age and make appropriate referrals;
6. support the implementation of breastfeeding;
7. inform and advise the woman and her family on the importance of immunization;
8. facilitate the pregnant/postpartum woman and her family to access appropriate community resources;
9. assist the woman and her family in the development of the parenting skills;
10. identify and evaluate common causes of maternal and infant mortality and morbidity;
11. utilize information from a variety of reliable sources for planning and conducting health promotion and health education activities.

Attitude

1. supportive in enhancing the social well-being of the woman and her family;
2. proactive in identifying the woman's health needs and positive in meeting these needs;
3. concerned about contemporary public health issues that are related to maternity services;
4. respect for the woman's choices of locally available and culturally acceptable methods of family planning;
5. active in participating in activities for health promotion and health education;
6. committed to protecting the health of the woman and the society.

Competence Area 4: Professional, Ethical and Legal Aspects of Midwifery Practice

The entry level midwife should have the following:

Knowledge

1. general structure of the health care system;
2. structure and functions of the Midwives Council of Hong Kong;
3. Midwives Registration Ordinance, Cap. 162, Laws of Hong Kong;
4. Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Midwives in Hong Kong issued by the Midwives Council of Hong Kong;
5. Handbook for Midwives issued by the Midwives Council of Hong Kong;
6. roles and responsibilities of a midwife;
7. ethical and legal aspects of midwifery practice;
8. evidence-based practice;
9. continuing professional development;
10. reflective midwifery practice.

Skills

1. keep in pace with the contemporary trend and issues in health care system;
2. practise in accordance with:
 - Midwives Registration Ordinance, Cap. 162, Laws of Hong Kong;
 - Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Midwives in Hong Kong issued by the Midwives Council of Hong Kong;
 - Handbook for Midwives issued by the Midwives Council of Hong Kong;
 - contemporary ethical principles and legal requirements;
3. communicate and work collaboratively with other professionals to improve the delivery of care to the woman and family;
4. appreciate research findings relevant to midwifery practice;
5. participate in the development and management of midwifery practice;
6. participate in self reflection, peer review, continuing education and other activities that ensure and validate quality practice.

Attitude

1. committed to personal integrity, honesty and self-discipline;
2. respect for life, dignity and human rights, regardless of nationality, race, age and social status;
3. positive in accepting challenges and growing responsibilities;
4. accepting professional responsibilities and be accountable for one's own practice;
5. sensitive to one's own attitude, biases and values and their potential impact on practice;
6. concerned about maintaining and promotion of professional image;
7. committed to act as a role model for other colleagues;
8. supportive to professional organizations in functions conducive to professional development;
9. committed to life-long learning and professional development.

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Acknowledgement

The Midwives Council of Hong Kong wishes to thank the following Members and persons for their effort and time in preparing the booklet:

<u>Hospital</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
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