

<i>Guideline:</i>	Electronic Storage of Client Health Records
<i>Reference #:</i>	G17-C091609
<i>Approved by:</i>	Council
<i>Date approved:</i>	September 16, 2009
<i>Attachments:</i>	none

Electronic Storage of Client Health Records

The College's proposed records regulation sets out the information that must be collected, recorded and kept as a part of the client health record.

The College's requirement is that the **information** in the client health record must be retained for 10 years for the mother and 28 years for the baby (i.e., 10 years after the age of majority). Midwives may keep one record for mother *and* infant; however, keep in mind the record retention requirements of the College.

The College's requirements for records retention do not prevent or prohibit midwives from transferring the records to electronic files for the purposes of storage. When converting client records for storage, members should ensure that College policies are followed with the respect to:

- The content of the record,
- Secure and safe storage of the record,
- Reasonable client access,
- Image quality of the record

Another important factor for practices to consider is that originals are considered the best evidence in the case of a complaint or a lawsuit; practices may want to consider retaining original client records for any case where an incident report has been filed or a complaint has been or is likely to be laid. Additionally, if the image quality compromises the legibility of the client record, then an original paper copy of the record should be kept.

Practices may want to consider the development of a protocol or policy to ensure a consistent approach for all client records. Practices might want to include the following when developing their protocol or policy:

- The most pertinent clinical information should be included in the electronic file
- Pertinent non-clinical issues such as informed choice discussion checklists, midwife and student signature list, narrative notes etc., should be included
- Pertinent privacy and protection laws (e.g. Locked storage, back-up files)
- Environmental issues (e.g. dehumidifier, fire-proof)
- Consider providing the client with a copy at final discharge