

Standard:	Second Birth Attendants
Approved by:	Council
Date Approved:	September 24, 2014
Revision date(s):	December 7, 2016
Effective date:	January 1, 2015
Attachments:	none



College of  
**Midwives**  
of Ontario

Ordre des  
**sages-femmes**  
de l'Ontario

## SECOND BIRTH ATTENDANTS

### Purpose

The purpose of this Standard is to establish the requirements for second birth attendants at midwifery births.

Midwifery standards of practice refer to the minimum standard of professional behaviour and clinical practice expected of midwives in Ontario.

### Definition

The second birth attendant is someone (other than an Ontario registered midwife) who assists at midwife attended births. A second birth attendant is not permitted to provide prenatal or postpartum care beyond the “immediate” postpartum period.<sup>1</sup>

### Background

The midwifery model of care requires two midwives in attendance at each birth.<sup>2</sup> In some circumstances where there are College-approved Alternate Practice Arrangements in place, midwifery practices may work with second birth attendants who carry out the activities normally carried out by the second midwife.

Midwifery practices must seek and obtain prior approval, through an Alternate Practice Arrangement Application, from the College before working with a second birth attendant.

### Standard

The second birth attendant must have the knowledge and understanding of midwifery in Ontario, including the regulations, standards, policies and guidelines of the College of Midwives of Ontario.

The second birth attendant must possess the knowledge, skill and judgment necessary to assist in labour and birth, including common obstetrical emergencies.

The second birth attendant must be competent to:

1. Act in accordance with the midwifery practice's protocols;
2. Assist with set up and retrieval of instruments, supplies, drugs and gases used by midwives;

<sup>1</sup> Immediate postpartum care by the second attendant refers to care that takes place at the time immediately following childbirth and not in a subsequent visit.

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of midwifery students attending births. See the Standard, *Clinical Education and Student Supervision* (July 2014).

3. Act in accordance with universal infection control practices (i.e., relating to bodily fluids);
4. Assess maternal and newborn vitals;
5. Assess uterine tone and position in the immediate postpartum;
6. Provide immediate newborn care including neonatal resuscitation;
7. Perform adult cardiopulmonary resuscitation (BCLS);
8. Assist in obstetrical emergencies;
9. Document in accordance with the *Standard on Record Keeping*.

Each midwifery practice that has received approval for the use of second birth attendant(s) must be prepared to demonstrate to the College of Midwives of Ontario at any time the competence of their second birth attendant(s).<sup>3</sup>

Where a midwife works with a second birth attendant:

1. The second birth attendant meets expectations of having the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment to assist in labour and delivery and immediate postpartum.
2. The midwife is responsible for primary care throughout the full course of care.
3. The midwife is physically present and aware when the second birth attendant is providing care.
4. The second birth attendant assists the midwife only at the time of birth and immediate postpartum.
5. The second birth attendant may not perform the newborn assessment or sign the newborn assessment record.
6. New Registrants may not attend births with a second birth attendant.
7. The midwife must ensure that the care provided be in accordance with the *Ontario Model of Midwifery Care*, CMO Standards of Practice, and the *Code of Ethics* of the College of Midwives of Ontario.
8. The second birth attendant may receive delegations, orders and directives as per the CMO Standard *Delegation, Orders and Directives* and the midwife providing the delegation, order or directive must be present while the delegation, order or directive is carried out, and despite such delegation, order or directive assumes responsibility for the care of the client.
9. If the second birth attendant is herself a health professional regulated under the *RHPA, 1991*, she may perform only those controlled acts authorized to her by her professional statute, unless she receives and accepts a delegation from the midwife.
10. When the second birth attendant is a health professional regulated under the *RHPA, 1991*, she remains responsible to her college for any care she provides.
11. If the second birth attendant does not have their own professional liability insurance the midwife must ensure that her liability insurance extends to include the coverage

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<sup>3</sup> The midwifery practice may use multiple evaluation processes including interviews, oral assessments, review of documentation such as references, registration certificates from other colleges regulated in Ontario and the successful completion of approved courses in cardiopulmonary and neonatal resuscitation. A probationary period may be set up by the practice for the second birth attendant(s) and they may be supervised for evaluation purposes during this time. Documentation of this process should be maintained by the midwifery practice and the second birth attendant(s) so that it is available if requested by the College.

- of the second birth attendant.<sup>4</sup>
12. The midwife's informed choice document will clearly outline the role and duties of the second birth attendant as well as the duties that the second birth attendant may not carry out.

A practice protocol should be developed by the midwifery practice group to address second birth attendants, including, at a minimum: how the practice approves second birth attendants, circumstances where second birth attendants may reasonably be called upon, and the procedures (including via delegations, orders, directives) they may be asked to perform.

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of approval of this CMO Standard, the AOM's HIROC insurance for midwives extends to include coverage for College-approved second birth attendants.