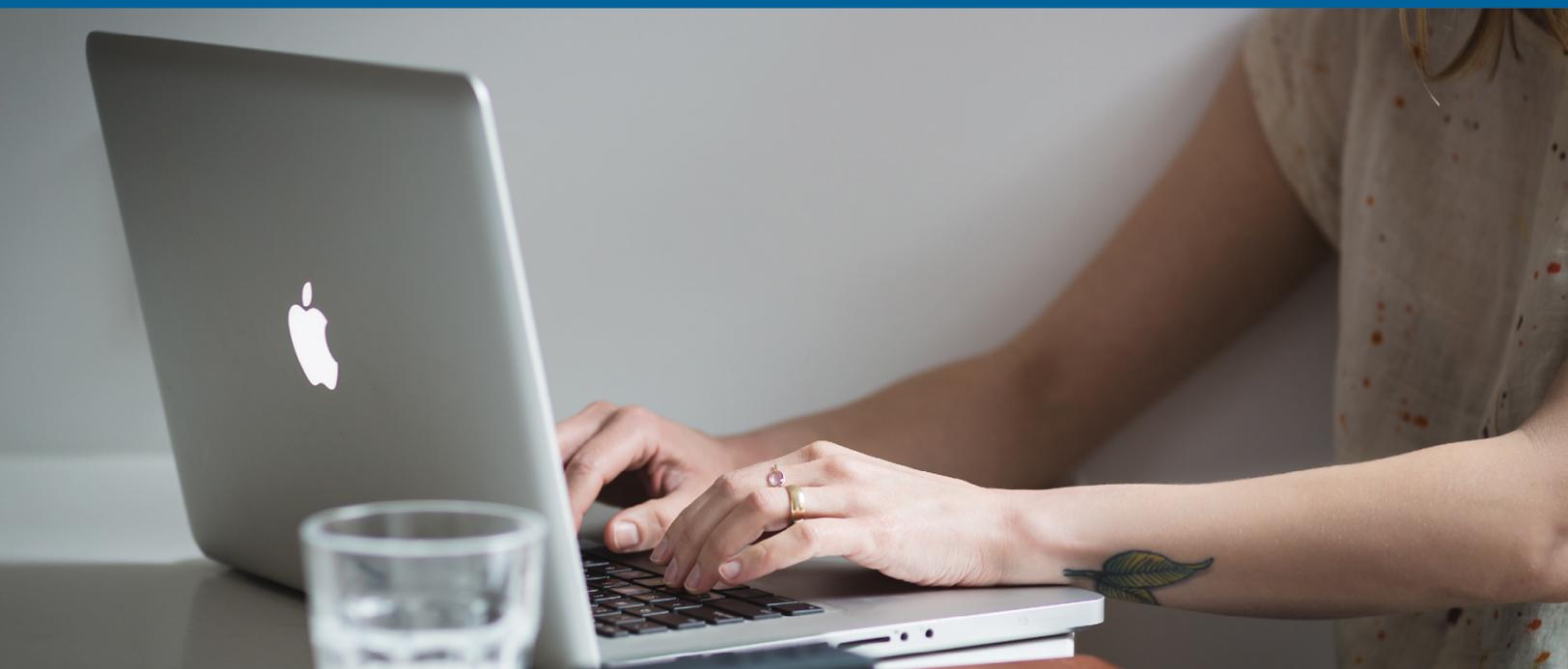


College of Midwives of Ontario  
**Guidelines for Midwives**

Using Social Media  
& Using Electronic Communications



College of  
Midwives  
of Ontario

Ordre des  
sages-femmes  
de l'Ontario

## Midwives Using Social Media

Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs and websites can be effective tools for midwives to connect professionally with clients, colleagues, and the public. However, their highly accessible nature can pose risks to midwives' professional obligations, including maintaining appropriate boundaries<sup>[1]</sup> and safeguarding client privacy<sup>[2]</sup>.

The following are some suggestions for midwives to consider regarding their use of social media:

- Consider whether becoming a friend of a client or following them on social media will blur professional boundaries
- Be conscious of posting photos and posts that may breach client privacy
- Discuss with clients that social media is not an appropriate forum to discuss personal health information, including clinical and time-sensitive matters
- Develop a policy or protocol regarding the use of social media at your practice. You may wish to include provisions regarding the following:
  - The goal/purpose for using social media
  - Who will be responsible for making posts
  - What information is appropriate to post about
  - Who is appropriate to friend or follow on social media
  - Appropriate security settings
  - Guidelines regarding personal social media use

Crossing professional boundaries and/or failing to safeguard client privacy can have serious consequences for midwives. For example, they may be sued in court and/or found to have committed professional misconduct. Therefore, it is recommended that they consider the suggestions noted above and any additional factors relevant to meeting their professional obligations while using social media.

### Additional Resources:

- [HIROC Risk Note: Communicating Through Social Media](#)
- Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) 2014 Webinar on Social Media (available on the Member's Only webinar archive)

[1] For more information, see CMO's [Guideline on Appropriate Professional Behaviour](#).

[2] For more information, see CMO's [Guide on Compliance with Personal Health Information & Protection Act](#).

## Midwives Using Electronic Communications

As electronic communication is frequently used in the practise of midwifery, there are important safeguards midwives should consider implementing to minimize risks of breaching client privacy and/or failing to meet standards of practice. The following are some suggestions:

- Provide clients with informed choice discussions regarding the risks and benefits of communicating electronically
- Recommend asking clients to sign a consent form, based on your community's needs
- Develop a policy or protocol regarding electronic communications with clients and colleagues, which can include the following:
  - subject matters that are appropriate for electronic communication as opposed to in-person visits
  - the timeframe within which electronic messages will be responded to
  - measures that should be taken to ensure the safekeeping of client information on electronic devices (e.g. password protection and encryption)
- Ensure appropriate documentation of electronic communications with clients in their medical records
- Be mindful when using a public server

Breaching client privacy and/or a standard of practice can have serious consequences for midwives. For example, they may be sued in court and/or found to have committed professional misconduct. Therefore, it is recommended that they consider the suggestions noted above and any additional factors pertaining to electronic communications that are relevant to their practise of midwifery.

### Additional Resources

- CMO's [Guide on Compliance with Personal Health Information & Protection Act](#)
- Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) webinar: Protecting Client Privacy in the Electronic Environment. Wednesday April 6, 2016 (also archived on the AOM's member webpage).



College of  
**Midwives**  
of Ontario

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