

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN SUPERVISING STUDENTS

Preamble

Appropriate clinical supervision enables students to learn and achieve professional¹ competence, confidence, and autonomy, ultimately ensuring safe and appropriate client care. The student's ability to develop the appropriate professional values, knowledge, skills, and behaviours is largely influenced by their supervisors and the learning environment in which they are supervised and mentored. Similarly, client safety that is at the core of quality midwifery care, is inseparable from a good learning environment and culture that values and supports students. Midwives supervising students are accountable and responsible for clients in their care and for their professional decisions and actions.¹

Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to define the professional responsibilities of midwives who supervise students.

Definitions

Supervisor means a midwife who supervises a student in a clinical environment. This can include:

- a midwife who is the preceptor and is responsible for overseeing a specific student's clinical work through a placement in a clinical environment. They lead the evaluation and assessment of the student's practice throughout a placement and contribute to the report on whether the student should progress to the next stage of their training.
- a midwife who is the most responsible provider and holds overall responsibility for leading and coordinating the delivery and organization of a client's care and supervises a student at a specific moment in time.

Student means a person enrolled in an education or bridging program to become a regulated health professional.

¹ The term *professional* encompasses the role and duties of a midwife as set out in the Professional Standards for Midwives.

Conflict of interest means a situation where a supervisor's personal relationship with a student improperly influences the supervisor's judgment, which may compromise the quality of the student's learning or client care and safety.

Standard

Clinical supervision and involvement in client care

1. Supervisors must ensure appropriate supervision when a student is involved in client care by:
 - a) Ensuring that a student's supervision is proportionate to the student's abilities, performance, confidence, and clinical experience and reflects their learning needs and stage of learning.
 - b) Determining and adjusting the level of supervision as needed, including determining when a student has the knowledge and skills to provide client care without the supervisor being physically present or to independently attend a birth as the second midwife.
 - c) Being immediately available to the student when not physically present during the clinical encounter or if unavailable, ensuring that an appropriate alternative supervisor is immediately available and has agreed to provide supervision.
2. Supervisors must ensure that a midwifery student only works within the boundaries of the midwifery scope of practice and the controlled acts authorized to midwives and adheres to the standards of the profession and other relevant standards. When supervising a non-midwifery student, all controlled acts must be delegated in accordance with the midwifery standards of practice.
3. Supervisors must have current knowledge and experience in the area in which they are providing supervision and feedback to a student.
4. Supervisors must ensure that a discussion occurs with the client regarding the role of the student and client consent is obtained when a student is involved in their care.
5. Supervisors must continuously monitor and identify concerns about a student's performance or conduct that may affect client safety. Once identified, concerns affecting the safety of clients must be addressed immediately and effectively.

Learning environment

6. Supervisors must have the capacity and resources to provide appropriate clinical supervision and practical experiences for a student.

7. Supervisors must ensure that a student receives sufficient orientation to the practice and clear guidance about their clinical role before they get involved in direct client care.
8. Supervisors must create and foster a learning environment that:
 - a) Provides learning opportunities for consolidating skills and developing the professional knowledge, skills and behaviours required of midwives practising in Ontario.
 - b) Supports compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, policies, and standards governing the practice of midwifery.
 - c) Ensures students have an appropriate workload that minimizes the adverse effects of fatigue on the provision of client care.

Professional conduct and boundaries

9. Supervisors must model integrity and leadership and act when a student is subjected to, or subjects others to, behaviours that undermine their professional confidence, performance, or self-esteem.
10. Supervisors must take reasonable steps to avoid supervising a student while in a conflict of interest, which includes supervising a relative or a person with whom they have a close or intimate relationship.²
11. Supervisors must provide honest and objective assessments of student performance and competence.
12. Supervisors must not engage in inappropriate sexual conduct or sexually abuse a student while mentoring, teaching, supervising, or evaluating the student.³
13. Supervisors must not engage in discrimination, violence, or harassment (including intimidation) against students.
14. Supervisors must assist and provide direction to students encountering disruptive behaviour (including discrimination, violence, and harassment) in the learning environment.⁴

² It may not be possible in certain practice settings to avoid supervising a student with whom a midwife has a personal relationship, but it must never put a student at risk of harm.

³ Sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual conduct include a sexual physical relationship with a student, touching a student in a sexual manner, or behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature by the midwife towards the student.

⁴ Assistance and direction include, but are not limited to, taking action as required in accordance with applicable institutional policies, policies, and codes of conduct.

References (legislative and other)

Professional Standards for Midwives (June 2021)
Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991

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