
A Healthy Approach

October 16, 2008

Alberta expands health care coverage to midwifery

Expectant mothers will have more choice and improved access to care

Edmonton... The Alberta government is improving access to maternity services by bringing midwives fully into the publicly funded health system. Effective April 1, 2009, expectant mothers who choose to have their babies with the assistance of a midwife will have that service covered.

“This decision will provide better access and more choice for expectant women and will relieve pressure on doctors, nurses and hospitals,” said Alberta Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert. “Expanding the use of midwifery services will also help address the pressures on family physicians and obstetricians and meet the goal of introducing new service delivery models as outlined in the Health Workforce Action Plan.”

With this change, expectant mothers will have access to innovative, publicly funded midwifery services in a variety of locations including hospitals, community birthing centers, or in their homes. Services will be accessible across the province, in accordance with midwifery guidelines.

The Alberta Health Services Board will receive \$4 million for midwifery service implementation across Alberta in the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

The Alberta Health Services Board in conjunction with Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Association of Midwives will develop and establish a structure that provides full midwifery services to all Alberta women with low-risk pregnancies. This service will emphasize various options for expectant mothers; foster collaboration between midwives, physicians, nurses and other health care professionals; and create a sustainable model for the future.

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Backgrounder: Background on midwifery services in Alberta

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Background on midwifery services in Alberta

In 1994, Cabinet approved the Midwifery Regulation under the Health Disciplines Act. The Regulation describes the midwives' scope of practice and establishes provisions for standards of practice, education and discipline of registered midwives.

In 1995, Alberta Health and Wellness began to subsidize liability insurance premiums of midwives in order to ensure sustainability of the profession.

In 2003, the ministry increased liability subsidization for midwives to cover all costs less \$1,000/year per midwife. The existing grant that subsidizes liability insurance premiums expires on December 31, 2008.

In 1995 the ministry began providing the regulatory function of the College of Midwifery.

As of September 1 2007, there were 31 Registered Midwives and 6 Student Midwives in Alberta.

A variety of publicly funded service delivery models of midwifery exist in Canada.

Midwives provide safe, viable and cost effective services for women with low risk pregnancies. (World Health Organization; May 2006)

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