



Midwifery in British Columbia

Fact Sheet

HISTORY

- The government announced on March 16, 1995 the approval of regulations of governing midwifery and establishing the College of Midwives of BC
- In May 1996, the Health Professional Council released a draft of Bylaws for the College of Midwives of BC. This received Cabinet approval on April 13, 1997
- In 1998, midwives were officially registered with the government and the College of Midwives of B.C.

BACKGROUND

- Midwives have been regulated by government and publicly funded since January 1998. This year, 2007 marks the 10th Anniversary of this regulation
- All services provided by Registered Midwives are covered by the Medical Services Plan and funded by the Ministry of Health

MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

- 128 midwives are registered in B.C. in 2007; 102 are currently practicing in B.C.
- Midwives deliver 6.6% of babies each year in B.C.; The BC Perinatal Database Registry data shows midwives experienced an increase of deliveries from 4.8% in 2001/2002 to 5.7% in 2003/2004
- A midwife is licensed to care for 40 clients a year; this is a provincially-imposed cap
- 2639 B.C. women in 2005 chose midwives to deliver their babies (approx. 40,139 B.C. women gave birth in the same year)
- Midwives educated in B.C. complete a four-year university degree program and are required to register with the College of Midwives, the regulatory body for midwives in the province
- The College of Midwives' mandate is to ensure public safety; providing rules and regulations that protect women and infants
- Midwives are experts in low-risk pregnancies and deliver excellent care to women; often spending 45 minutes each visit throughout the pregnancy and post-partum period

GROWTH OF THE PROFESSION

- The midwife program at the University of British Columbia accepts 10 applicants each year; approximately 8 to 10 graduates enter the market per year
- Each year there are approximately 16-20 new midwives registered; UBC program or other sources (foreign trained or transfers from other provinces)



- In each health region the existing Department of Midwifery determines how many midwives can have hospital privileges – for example, in Victoria there are 13 midwives; 10 of whom have hospital privileges

ATTRITION RATE

Registered Midwives in BC – Jan.2007	Non-Practicing	New Registrants – since Apr.2006	Total # practicing today
128	26	18	102

Town/City	# of Midwives
Greater Vancouver Area	56
Victoria	13
Saltspring Island	2
Duncan	4
Nanaimo	4
Courtney	3
Errington	1
Comox	1
Roberts Creek	2
Nelson	4
Cranbrook	2
Kelowna	2
Vernon	1
Lister	3
Prince George	3

- “midwifery services in rural communities are vulnerable to shifting labour and delivery services to regional centres including hospital closures and high GP attrition rates”
- “Although one rationale for the regulation and public funding of midwifery in BC was increased access, to date rural women have not, for the most part, benefited from regulated midwifery”
- “legislative deterrents including current fee-for-service models of remuneration that make practice in low-volume environment challenging ”

(reference: Rural Women’s Experiences of Maternity Care: Implications for Policy and Practice, published July 2007 www.ruralmatresearch.net)