

M.03.02.Res.01 Midwifery care for women in prison¹ information sheet

Prisoners who are pregnant have the same access to the Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) system as any other women in the community. The LMC is funded by the Ministry of Health and ensures pregnant women have access to health care throughout their pregnancy and for 4-6 weeks after the birth of their child. The prison has a responsibility to facilitate this process.

What does a midwife do?

A midwife works in partnership with pregnant women to give the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period up to six weeks, to facilitate birth and to provide care for the newborn²³. The midwife will work with other health professionals to provide all the services you need during pregnancy, labour and delivery, and the period immediately following birth.

In New Zealand, midwives are registered with the Midwifery Council and now typically have a degree in midwifery. Midwives, like other health professionals, must perform within their scope of practice, demonstrate their competence to the Midwifery Council and have a current Annual Practicing Certificate.

During the pregnancy:

The Midwife conducts a comprehensive pregnancy assessment including a physical examination, an assessment of the pregnant woman's general health, family and obstetric history. The midwife monitors the progress of the pregnancy to identify any possible complications, and refers appropriately for assistance if necessary. The midwife provides one to one education focusing on pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding. The midwife also makes the arrangements for midwifery care during labour, birth, and the period immediately following the birth.

The midwife will work with the pregnant prisoner, the case manager, prison health staff, and other prison staff in the development of a care plan. In Corrections Services this is referred to as the mother and child health care plan. This plan includes the pregnant woman's intentions in regards to the care of her child. For example, her intentions to apply to use the self-care unit or the feeding and bonding facilities or have the child cared for outside of the prison environment, her intentions regarding breastfeeding, and the identification of alternative caregivers. The criteria and approval process to have the child reside in the self care unit or use the feeding and bonding facilities is outlined in the Prison Operations Manual M.03.02 Female and pregnant prisoners, M.03.03 Feeding and bonding facilities and M.03.04 Self-care units for women. The midwife will also keep her own clinical notes.

¹ This information sheet was developed in consultation with New Zealand College of Midwives (Inc). March 2005

² Midwifery Council. *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003: Notice of Scopes of Practice and Related Qualifications Prescribed by the Midwifery Council.*

³ College of Midwives. *Scope of Practice of the Midwife.*

Following the birth:

The midwife will provide a clinical examination of the child within 24 hours of its delivery and visit the woman daily while in hospital. The midwife provides 5-10 home visits once the woman is discharged from hospital, including a home visit within 24 hours of discharge, and an examination of the child prior to transfer of care to the Well Child Provider. In the case of a prisoner, home visits are made to the woman in the prison.

The focus of these visits is to⁴:

- provide support for the woman
- assist the woman and child in breastfeeding and nutritional needs
- assess the risk of postnatal depression, or, if the woman is residing in the community, ask about the risk of family violence
- provide Ministry of Health information on immunisation
- facilitate the transfer of care to the Well Child Tamariki Ora Provider 4-6 weeks after the birth
- provide advice on contraception
- provide some parenting advice and education.

So what can I expect from my Midwife?

The midwife will negotiate with you the frequency of antenatal visits and visits 4-6 weeks after your child is born. The midwife will liaise with prison staff to discuss actual dates and times. You may see the midwife more often if there is a clinical need such as the child is not feeding well. This may be a phone call or a visit depending on the issue or need. The midwife will provide a phone advice service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and arrange care for urgent problems. If you are extremely concerned about your child and need urgent medical assistance let the prison staff know. The on call nurse will be contacted and ambulance called if required.

How do I get a midwife?

If you were already under the care of a midwife prior to coming to prison you are able to continue with the midwife, if she/he is willing to visit you in the prison. If you do not have a midwife prior to coming to prison, or your current LMC is unable to continue providing for you, the Health Services staff will assist you in locating a midwife. The nurse will organise the first appointment for you with the midwife you select. Ideally, you should be registered with a midwife by the end of the first three months of your pregnancy.

Can I change my midwife?

Yes, if you are unhappy with the service you are getting from your midwife or your circumstances change, for example you are released and move to a different region, you can change your midwife. If you are unhappy with your current midwife, talk to her about the reasons why as you may be able to resolve any issues. If you still want to change your midwife, talk to the Health Services staff or case manager about locating a new midwife.

⁴ Ministry of Health. *Maternity Services, Notice pursuant to Section 88 of the New Zealand Public Health & Disability Act 2000.*

What if I have health needs that are not related to my pregnancy?

Any other health needs you may have are dealt with by the prison Health Services. Ask to see a nurse to discuss any other health concerns. The nurse may arrange for you to see the medical officer, who may then refer you to a specialist if required.

Who do I see if I get post natal depression?

If you, the midwife, the case manager or any other staff have concerns regarding your mental health, including depression, then arrangements can be made for you to see a medical officer at the prison Health Services. The medical officer will refer you for any ongoing treatments you may require.

So who looks after my child's health needs after it is 4-6 weeks old?

The health checks of children older than 4-6 weeks in prison, and in the community, are provided by a Well Child Tamariki Ora Provider. Well Child Providers include GPs and Plunket and in some areas Maori Tamariki Ora providers. The service is provided free of charge. If your child needs to visit a GP, you and your child will be taken to a GP in the community rather than use the prison Health Services. This is to ensure your child has the same access to Well Child services as you would have in the community.

What if I want to talk to someone about breastfeeding or other issues to do with caring for my child after it is 4-6 weeks old?

Your Well Child Tamariki Ora provider will come into the prison to see you regarding any issues. You can also see a lactation specialist if you have difficulties breastfeeding or expressing milk – just talk to the case manager or the Health Services staff to arrange a referral. The prison also has a contracted community based provider who runs parenting programmes in prison. Talk to your case officer, the case manager or your Unit PCO about when the next parenting programme is available.