



# SAFETY FOR MIDWIVES - A Guide to Keeping Calm and Staying Safe

- P** PRINCIPLES – READ & REMEMBER
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- A** ACTION, RESPOND CALMLY, DE-ESCALATE
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## PRINCIPLES

- Midwives have a responsibility to take care of their health and safety, the right to work in safe and healthy environments and to perform their work without risk to physical and psychological health
- Any midwife may find themselves in a situation where they are exposed to threatening, bullying or abusive behaviour
- If midwives feel unsafe then women and their babies may also be unsafe
- Midwifery partnerships with women and families/whānau are generally positive experiences, however, it is strategic to identify potentially unsafe situations to avoid or minimise any risk
- When a work situation has been identified as unsafe midwives need to consider whether they continue to provide care, or make alternative arrangements for the woman's care

## EVALUATING & IDENTIFYING RISK

### CONSIDER RISK FACTORS SUCH AS:

- Mental health issues for women and families
- History of family violence
- Illicit drug and alcohol abuse
- Aggressive manner or verbal abuse directed to midwives or others
- Care and protection issues



## **ACTIONS & COMMUNICATION:**

### **PRACTICAL TIPS FOR RESPONSE & DE-ESCALATION**

- Remain calm, listen carefully, talk and move slowly
- Maintain a relaxed persona and do not raise your voice
- Do not touch the potential aggressor
- Do not tell the person to relax or calm down as this may escalate rather than de-escalate the situation
- Communicate and debrief later with colleagues
- Document your concerns and actions in the most appropriate place which may need to be a separate record than the woman held maternity notes
- Inform others who may be potentially at risk (e.g. Well Child provider)
- Consider phoning the College National Office to speak with a Midwifery Advisor if needed

## **ESCAPE IF NECESSARY: PLAN**

- Be prepared – have a mobile phone charged at all times and a large heavy torch with working batteries
- Be prepared – mobile phones have an emergency mode and 111 can be dialled for emergencies
- Do not enter a situation alone if feeling unsafe – consider visiting with a colleague if appropriate
- Alert practice partners to concerns and always tell them (or appropriate person) of the time and visit location
- Examine other options with the woman when necessary for ongoing contacts in terms of safe settings for appointments
- Be aware of the exits and park the car in a place that enables ease of departure.

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