

Consensus Statement:

Emergency and disaster planning
and response: The role of midwives

Approved, awaiting ratification



New Zealand
College of Midwives
Te Kāraeti o ngā Kaiwhakawhānau ki Aotearoa



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Tauāki | Statement

The New Zealand College of Midwives | Te Kāreti o ngā Kaiwhakawhānau ki Aotearoa (the College) recognises the increasing frequency and severity of emergency and disaster events and the significant consequences for personal health and wellbeing, public health, livelihoods, food security, water availability and human security. The College is committed to disaster planning and response initiatives and acknowledges midwives and midwifery care as contributing essential and critical work during emergencies. In disasters and emergencies, mothers and their infants are among the most vulnerable of populations (DeYoung et al., 2022; Harville et al., 2021; Wong, 2017).

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Ngā kōrero matua | Key points

- Midwives are essential in assessing the actions needed to ensure pregnancy, labour/ birth and post birth care of the mother and infant are provided and sustained to the highest possible standard attainable during emergency situations.
- Midwives play a critical part in supporting breastfeeding and ensuring safe infant feeding practices during times of disaster (New Zealand College of Midwives, 2025).
- Midwives respond effectively in a crisis to provide midwifery care in resource-limited environments, in hospital settings and in the community.

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- Midwives in Aotearoa New Zealand must be included as part of emergency preparedness planning. The International Confederation of Midwives has urged governments and humanitarian organisations to include midwives in emergency preparedness and response programmes and to deploy midwives as part of multidisciplinary response teams (International Confederation of Midwives, 2024).
- The College is committed to developing and maintaining strategic networks and partnerships with relevant stakeholders for disaster preparedness and humanitarian response work and welcomes involvement with national and regional disaster planning teams.
- The College considers that collaboration between midwives, communities and community leaders, the government, crisis management teams, emergency services, media organisations and other relevant stakeholders will ensure that the best interests of mothers, infants and their whānau are being met during national or regional emergency crisis situations.
- The Ministry of Health has plans in place in case of emergencies. The National Health Emergency Plan provides guiding principles which aim to support healthcare providers and the general public in case of an emergency (Ministry of Health, 2015).
- Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora provides national and regional emergency management information which includes links to citizen public health information (Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, 2025).
- The College supports the four defining elements of the National Health Emergency Plan which are: Reduction of risk; Readiness; Response; and Recovery (Ministry of Health, 2015).

Rārangi Tohutoro | References

DeYoung, S. E., Fraser, R. J., & Gerber-Chavez, L. (2022). Maternal and infant health in disasters: Texas's high-risk landscape. *Women's Health, 18*, Article 17455057221112289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17455057221112289>

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New Zealand College of Midwives. (2025). *Consensus statement: Infant feeding in emergencies and disasters*. <https://www.midwife.org.nz/midwives/professionalpractice/guidance-for-practice/>

Wong, A. (2017). *Essential Newborn Care during Humanitarian Crises: Integration of Low-Cost Interventions*. Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection. 2755. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3780&context=isp_collection&utm

Whakamana | Ratification

This statement will be ratified at the College's AGM in March 2026.

Arotake | Review - 2030

The purpose of the College guidance statements is to provide midwives, women, whānau and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation and provide guidance for practice. This guidance is designed to educate and support best practices and is regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.

Please note: Statements may be updated within the review period. We recommend midwives refer to the College website for the most up-to-date versions. <https://www.midwife.org.nz/midwives/professional-practice/guidance-for-practice/>

Tūtohu | Suggested Citation

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