Lesotho Nursing Council

STANDARDS FOR
MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

1st Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Midwifery practice standards are statements describing the desirable and achievable level of performance expected of midwives in their practice, against which actual performance can be measured.

These standards apply at all times regardless of role and the context in which the midwife is practising. They are further supported by the midwife's code of professional ethics. The standards can be used as guidelines to assist with professional decision-making as well as setting out for the midwife, other health professionals, midwifery educators, health service managers, health planners and the public what can be expected from practising registered midwives.

Finally, but equally important, the standards are used as a legal reference by the Lesotho Nursing Council and/or a juridical authority as a bench mark for reasonable and prudent practice, when the midwife has to face questions of competence or unethical/unprofessional behaviour.

PURPOSE

Standards for nursing practice will be used to:

- Monitor care
- Identify deficiencies in care
- Communicate expectations– care to expect
- Communicate the nature of nursing practice to others
- Help to develop management tools to aid in the planning and delivery of care.
- Promote universal levels of performance
- Describe incompetent practice

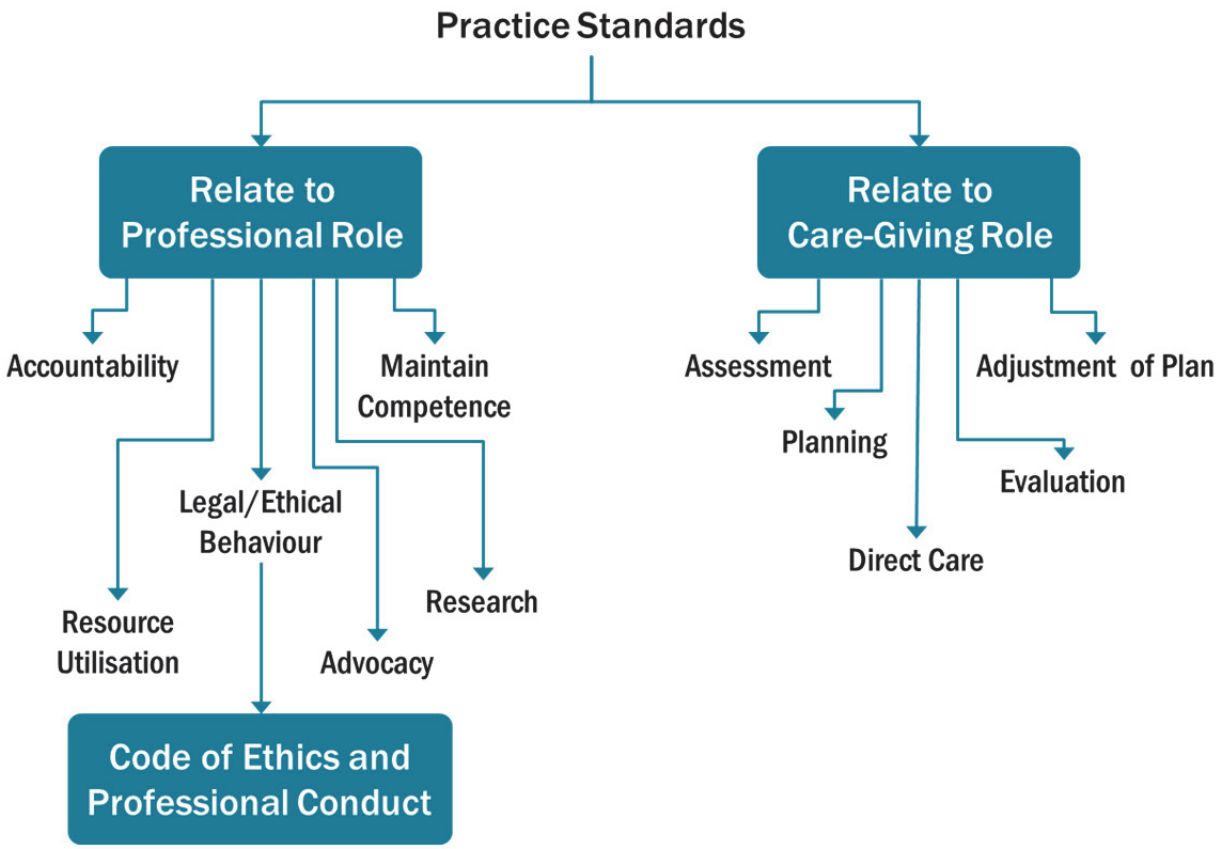
DOMAINS FOR STANDARD SETTING

The practice standards are organised around two major domains. Those related to the

- Professional role
- Care giving role

See Figure 1 for the sub-domains under each of the above roles.

Figure 1. Practice Standard Domains



THE MIDWIFERY PRACTICE STANDARDS

The midwife:

- Applies theoretical and/or evidence-based rationale and professional values to midwifery practice.
- Promotes a healthy family life and provide safe and effective, culturally relevant, appropriate care for women, new born and childbearing families.
- Functions in accordance with legislation affecting midwifery practice.
- Accepts accountability for own midwifery practice.
- Provides safe and effective antenatal care as required by national policy in order to maintain optimum health during pregnancy, detect complication early to allow treatment or referral.
- Provides appropriate and culturally sensitive care to women during labour by conducting a clean and safe delivery, and under selected emergency situations applies controlled cord traction, performs an episiotomy and repairs the perineum, and provides assistance by the use of forceps or vacuum extractor as allowed by the scope of practice and in accordance with national policy.
- Provides comprehensive, culturally sensitive, safe and effective care to the mother and baby immediately following the birth and for two months following birth.
- Provides a range of individualized abortion related care services for women and adolescents requiring or experiencing pregnancy termination or loss in accordance with Lesotho legal frameworks and with national protocols.

- Acts promptly to manage and treat major life threatening complications related to pregnancy and childbirth (Emergency Obstetrical and Neonatal Care (EmONC)).

In the next section each standard is accompanied by a set of indicators. The indicators illustrate in observable or measurable ways how a standard may be met. As these are national level standards, the indicators are broad in nature, but it is expected that those using standards will refined and expand on the indicators so that they may better fit for:

- the context in which practice is taking place; and
- describe more specifically the practice expectations of midwives at the different levels of competency from entry level to advanced practice.

Standards can also assist in writing job descriptions, developing performance assessment tools, and in evaluating the quality of care. Finally, in developing the curriculum, the standards should be used as an essential document to assist educators to draw out the knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to be addressed during the education programme.

MIDWIFERY STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND INDICATORS

Standard 1 Applies theoretical and/or evidence-based rationale and professional values to midwifery practice.

Indicators

- Applies appropriate knowledge, skills, judgment to assess, plan, intervene evaluate, and revise care in all contexts of midwifery practice. This requires knowledge of:
  - Human anatomy and physiology related to conception and reproduction
  - Menstrual cycle and the process of conception
  - Midwifery, and the health sciences and the social sciences.
  - Growth and development related to sexuality, sexual development and sexual activity
  - Infant growth and development.
  - Cultural norms, practices and beliefs surrounding sexuality, sexual practices and child bearing and rearing.
- Knows and follows the code of professional midwifery practice and core values such and respect, dignity and equity.

Standard 2 Promotes a healthy family life and provide safe and effective, culturally relevant, appropriate care for women, new born and childbearing families.

Indicators

- Takes a health history, family history and relevant genetic history.
- Conducts a physical examination, ordering and interpreting investigative laboratory tests that evaluate potential for a healthy pregnancy. Provides health education on reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS and child survival.
- Provides information on natural method of child spacing and other locally available and culturally acceptable methods of family planning.

- Knows the indications and use of other methods of family planning, including barrier, steroidal, mechanical, chemical and surgical methods of contraception.
- Provides advice and counselling women and partners needing to make decisions about methods of family planning and decisions relating to unplanned or unwanted pregnancies.
- Provides family planning services.
- Identifies common acute and chronic disease conditions and refers if necessary for further management.
- Assesses for female genital mutilation and its potential effect on woman's health, and refers if necessary.

Standard 3 Functions in accordance with legislation affecting midwifery practice.

Indicators

- Acts in accordance with legislation affecting midwifery practice.
- Complies with national and institutional policies and guidelines that have legal and professional implications for practice.
- Maintains records and other documentation in accordance with legal requirements and professional guidelines.
- Practices in accordance with the standards of the LNC.

Standard 4 Accepts accountability for own midwifery practice.

Indicators

- Recognises and acts within own knowledge base and scope of practice.
- Identifies unsafe practice and takes appropriate action.
- Delegates, when necessary, activities matching abilities and scope of practice and provides appropriate supervision.
- When relevant, takes responsibility to coordinate and lead interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral sections in the management of mother and child health.
- Assumes responsibility for maintaining current midwifery knowledge and practice, and own on-going professional development.
- Participates in the development of the midwifery profession through membership of the professional association, contributing to expanding midwifery knowledge and assuming leadership responsibilities when appropriate.

Standard 5 Provides safe and effective antenatal care as required by national policy in order to maintain optimum health during pregnancy, detect complications early to allow treatment or referral.

Indicators

- Confirms pregnancy.
- Takes a health history and conducts focused physical antenatal examination.
- Correctly examines the abdomen and carries out a palpation to estimate the gestational age, monitor foetal growth; and as pregnancy progresses correctly identify the lie, presentation and

engagement of the foetal head to detect deviation from the normal and make timely referral as appropriate.

- Calculates accurately gestational age by menstrual history, size of the uterus, fundal growth patterns and use of ultrasound.
- Identifies deviations from the normal in diagnostic tests results.
- Provides sufficient information and counselling on matters related to a) relief of common discomfort, hygiene, sexuality and nutrition; b) safe non-pharmacological substances for the relief of common discomfort of pregnancy; and c) effects of prescribed medications, street drugs , traditional medicines , over the counter medicines, smoking and alcohol use on pregnancy and the foetus.
- Assists the pregnant woman and family with birth planning; the preparation for lactation and other forms of infant feeding; the preparation of clean, safe and suitable environment for home delivery, and arrangements for transferring/transporting the woman in labour if an emergency occurs of home; and how to recognize and act in emergency situations.
- Prescribe, dispense, or administer selected, life-saving drugs in accordance with their scope of practice.
- Takes appropriate action to prevent, detect and manage and/or refer as appropriate according to the national protocol, all cases of anaemia in pregnancy.
- Ensures early detection of raised blood pressure and recognise other signs and symptoms of pre-eclampsia to take correct action and refer as appropriate.
- Undertakes the management, treatment and support of HIV positive mother to prevent maternal-to-child transmission following national guidelines.
- Identifies an ectopic pregnancy and multiple foetuses and refers as appropriate action
- Assesses for and detects degrees of female genital mutilation, their potential effects on the birth process, and manages the pregnancy and delivery accordingly.
- Recognises maternal and neonatal risk factors requiring transfer of women to hospital prior to labour.
- Recognises and acts accordingly to signs and symptoms of conditions that are life threatening to the pregnant woman and foetus.
- Performs external version of breech presentation, if within scope of practice.
- Provides post-abortion care including :
  - Assessing for uterine involution; treat or refer as necessary;
  - Identifying abortion-related complications and treat or refer as appropriate
  - Educating self on post-abortion care, including rest and nutrition and on how to identify and deal with complications such as haemorrhage ; and family planning methods suitable for the post-abortion period

Standard 6 Provides appropriate and culturally sensitive care to women during labour by conducting a clean and safe delivery.

Indicators

- Correctly assess that labour has commenced and throughout labour, provides adequate, culturally sensitive monitoring and support that respects the woman's right to privacy.

- Manages measures to stimulate the onset of labour and augment uterine contractility.
- Uses available measures to assess maternal and foetal wellbeing during labour.
- Monitors the progress of the foetal presenting part, presentation positions during descent through the pelvis.
- Provides appropriate comfort measures and emotional support in all stages of labour through the use of pharmacological and non-pharmacological measures.
- Demonstrates safe administration of pharmacological substances.
- Institutes immediate, life-saving interventions in obstetrical emergencies (e.g., prolapsed cord, mal-presentation, shoulder dystocia, and foetal distress) to save the life of the foetus and the mother, while requesting medical attention and/or awaiting transfer.
- Takes measures to prevent cervical and pelvic floor damage.
- Identifies presence of an obstetric fistula and refers.
- Uses the principles of active management of third stage of labour to promote safe and complete delivery of the placenta.
- Manages postpartum haemorrhage, using appropriate techniques and utero-tonic agents as indicated.
- Inspects the placenta and membranes for completeness, and takes appropriate action in the case of placenta retention.
- Assists or performs (if within the scope of practice) assisted deliveries such as forceps delivery and vacuum extraction).
- Performs episiotomies (when clinically indicated) and repairs cervical, perineal tears and episiotomies if within their scope.

Standard 7 Provides comprehensive, culturally sensitive, safe and effective care to the mother and baby for six weeks following the birth.

Indicators

Infant

- Assesses the immediate condition of the new-born and ensures that breathing is established.
- Provides immediate care to the new-born, including cord care, maintenance of normal body temperature and identification.
- Performs an initial assessment of the new-born to detect significant abnormalities.
- Initiates emergency measures for respiratory distress, hypothermia, and hypoglycaemia.
- Provides routine care of the new-born, in accordance with national guidelines and protocols (e.g. eye care, screening tests, administration of Vitamin K).
- Assists with initiating breast feeding as soon as possible after birth and supports exclusive breastfeeding, unless contraindicated.
- Monitors the new born for signs and symptoms of complications and take action as appropriate.
- Gives appropriate care to a) pre-term and the low birth weight baby and b) a baby born to an HIV positive mother and arrange for referral if potentially serious complications arise.

Mother

- Carries out a comprehensive focused post-partum physical examination.
- Assesses and monitor progress of uterine involution and healing of lacerations and/or repairs.
- Manages maternal breastfeeding problems or complications, including mastitis.
- Promotes parent-infant bonding.
- Provides emergency treatment of late post-partum haemorrhage, and refers as necessary.
- Performs manual vacuum aspiration of the uterus for emergency treatment of late postpartum haemorrhage if within the scope of practice.
- Identifies and provides appropriate and timely first-line treatment for any complications detected during the postnatal period, and refers for further management as necessary.
- Provides information and support for women and/or their families who are bereaved due maternal death, stillbirth, pregnancy loss, neonatal deaths, and congenital abnormalities.
- Provides culturally appropriate health education/promotion and counselling on general health, personal hygiene, nutrition, neonatal and infant care, breast-feeding, immunisation and family planning.
- Advises on methods of family planning appropriate for use in the immediate postpartum period.
- Provides information on community based services available to the woman, infant and family and how they can be accessed.

Standard 8 Acts promptly to manage and treat major life threatening complications related to pregnancy and childbirth (Emergency Obstetrical and Neonatal Care (EmONC)).

Indicators

- Recognises and provides first line/life-saving management of the following major obstetric emergencies:
  - bleeding in pregnancy,
  - eclampsia,
  - prolonged and obstructed labour to include use of low forceps and vacuum extractor,
  - retained placenta, primary and secondary postpartum haemorrhage,
  - puerperal sepsis, and
  - birth asphyxia.