



The International Childbirth Initiative (ICI)

The 12 Steps (summary version) to Safe and Respectful MotherBaby-Family Maternity Care

- Step 1** **Treat every woman and newborn with compassion, respect and dignity**, without physical, verbal or emotional abuse, providing culturally safe and culturally sensitive care that respects the individual's customs, values, and rights to self-expression. **Provide informed choice** and privacy.
- Step 2** **Respect every woman's right to access and receive non-discriminatory and free or at least affordable care** throughout the continuum of childbearing, with the understanding that under no circumstances can a woman or baby be refused care or detained after birth for lack of payment.
- Step 3** **Routinely provide MotherBaby-Family maternity care**. Incorporate value- and partnership-based care grounded in evidence-based practice and driven by health needs and expectations as well as by health outcomes and cost effectiveness. Base care provision on what women want for their newborns and families. Optimize the normal bio-psycho-social processes of childbirth by promoting the midwifery philosophy and scope of practice for most women.
- Step 4** **Acknowledge the mother's right to continuous support during labour and birth** and inform her of its benefits, and ensure that she receives such support from providers and companions of her choice.
- Step 5** **Offer non-pharmacological comfort and pain relief measures during labour** as safe first options. If pharmacological pain relief options are available and requested, explain their benefits and risks.
- Step 6** **Provide evidence-based practices beneficial for the MotherBaby-Family** throughout the entire childbearing continuum.
- Step 7** **Avoid potentially harmful procedures and practices that have insufficient evidence of benefit outweighing risk for routine or frequent use** in normal pregnancy, labour, birth, and the post-partum and neonatal period.
- Step 8** **Implement measures that enhance wellness and prevent illness** for the MotherBaby-Family, including good nutrition, clean water, sanitation, hygiene, family planning, disease and complications prevention and pre-and-post natal education.
- Step 9** **Provide appropriate emergency obstetric and neonatal treatment** when needed. Ensure that staff are trained in recognizing (potentially) dangerous conditions and complications and in providing effective treatment or stabilization, and have established links for consultation and a safe and effective referral system.
- Step 10** **Have a supportive human resource policy** in place for recruitment and retention of dedicated staff, and ensure that staff are safe, secure, respected and enabled to provide good quality, collaborative, personalized care to women and newborns in a positive working environment.
- Step 11** **Provide a continuum of collaborative care** with all relevant health care providers, institutions, and organizations with established plans and logistics for communication, consultation and referral between all levels of care.
- Step 12** **Promote breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact**, refer to the 10 Steps of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative and integrate into practice, training, and policies.

