

"My Body, My Baby, My Birth"

Reclaiming Your Rights as a Pregnant Person



Thank You for Attending!

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Being Inclusive: Language

Not everyone who gives birth, identifies as a 'mother'

We cannot further ostracize those pregnant persons that do not identify as a women

The language related to pregnant persons must be more gender inclusive

Language matters. It shows respect, and ensures that people feel included in the care they receive.

This is the essence of reproductive justice.

The terms:

'Birth parent',

'pregnant person',

'pregnant and birthing people', and

'Antenatal care' and/or 'postpartum care'

Will be used in place of 'mother' and 'maternal care' whenever possible

Reproductive Justice

“...Fundamentally, reproductive justice aims to transform inequalities so that “all people have the social, political, and economic power and resources to make healthy decisions” about their “gender, bodies, sexuality, and families.” This includes the right to have children, to not have children, to parent one’s children, and to control one’s birthing options...”

- Center for Reproductive Rights

Be Accountable for Your Body, Your Baby, and Your Birth

Patient Rights

- Receive safe and proper care respectful of your diverse views, culture, spiritual traditions, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and abilities.
- **Have a medical professional clearly explain health issues and treatments to you**
- Participate in health care decisions
- **Ask questions**
- Express concerns
- **Give or refuse consent for any procedure, and for any reason**
- Request a second opinion; within reason
- **Your personal information is kept confidential**
- Have a Substitute Decision Maker act on your behalf if you cannot make health care decisions for yourself.
- **Receive information about your health care in a language you understand, with an interpreter if desired, within reasonable limits.**
- Request access to your health information records
- **Request your records maybe transferred to another clinician (there may or may not be a reasonable fee)**
- ****The right to access health care services that are affordable to all**

NOTE: Most health facilities will have information on patient rights posted around the building/clinic space

Patient Responsibilities

Choose an appropriate health care provider

Use health care resources responsibly

Keep an accurate history of personal medical information (e.g. dates of surgeries, types of medications)

Participate in health care decisions and ask questions if more information is needed before you can

Make certain the person you have chosen or who is designated by law to make health care decisions on your behalf (when you cannot) knows and understands your wishes.

Respect the right of everyone to work together in a respectful and abuse-free environment.

Follow instructions for medication and other treatments

Respect the rights of others seeking health care

Make healthy choices about your lifestyle and habits (i.e. Act in a safe and responsible manner.)

NOTE: Even if you do not meet these responsibilities, all of your rights as a patient are maintained

Get Informed: Use your **BRAIN**

B.enefits - To me, my baby my labour/birth

R.isks - To me, my baby, my labour/birth

A.lternatives - Other options short/long-term

I.ntuition - What does my gut say?

N.ext Steps/Not Now/No - Action/Time to think/Informed refusal

Taken From: <https://www.healthunit.com/making-informed-decisions>

CONSENT

- You are the primary decision-maker for your own health and that of your child
- Before you consent, know:
 - The potential benefits, risks, and alternatives to procedures, tests and medications.
 - Relevant research evidence, including any deficiency of clear evidence.
 - Identification of the clinician's bias, if significant.




Birth Rights in Action

- You found out your pregnant
 - Continue or Terminate?
- Where to go for prenatal care?
 - Family physician, Midwife (refer to OB if needed)
 - Your needs vs. Provider's resources
- Tests offered in Pregnancy
 - Genetics, Ultrasounds, STIs, GBS (IAP) etc
- Place of Birth
 - Hospital, Home, Toronto Birth Centre
- Who knows you've given birth? (VIP)
- Positions for birth & Mode of delivery
- Medications for Newborns
 - Erythromycin eye ointment
- Birth certificate
 - "All Families Are Equal Act"
- Breast Milk vs. Formula

Your Needs as a Birth Parent

- Care provider with accommodating clinic hours?
Long appointment times?
- Resources in another format (e.g. French, Braille)?
- Provider who can communicate in your primary language (e.g. ASL)?
- LGBTQ+ 'Positive Space'?
- Sex positive space?
- Care provider with shared identity?
- Your main care provider attends your birth?
- Birthing outside the hospital setting?
- Birth rituals observed?
- Trauma-informed care?
- Accessible health facility?
- Minimal interventions?



Common Barriers

- Systemic/Institutional racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism etc.
- Wait lists
- Fear of child welfare agencies
 - Birth Alert
- Work hours vs. Appointment Times
- Transportation
- Poverty
- Immigration Status*
 - Midwives have funding
- Need for childcare
- Existing health issues
- Cultural beliefs
- Mental Health/Trauma
- Poor support/Other advocates
- Staff with 'Compassion Fatigue'

How to Prepare For If Things Fall Apart

- Clinical providers can take steps to ensure birth parents still feel satisfied with their experience, despite things not going as planned.
- **Pregnant persons should be properly informed about what is expected to happen to their bodies during labour, delivery and recovery. (Pre-reading and by medical providers)**
- Create birth plans that are realistic, and are best aligned with what care providers can actually provide
- **A strong personality and/or strong advocate at one's side ensures that a birth parent can have their birth of 'first choice'.**
- Consider the involvement of non-birth parents and other support persons during labour/birth (who can be engaged in the birth process without hesitation or fear)
- **Support people need to keep calm, even in the event of an emergency, so that the focus of the emotional support remains on the birth parent.**

TIPS

- Ask around for recommendations about a care provider
- If you choose to birth in hospital, take a tour of the facility well in advance to get a sense of the vibe
- Be overly kind to administrative staff, nurses etc. Rarely does anyone show them kindness/respect
- (If applicable) Call the child welfare agency early in pregnancy. They have a duty to make a plan with you about 'keeping' your baby
- Keep meticulous notes about which nurses/doctors and/or midwives you saw during your care and at what time.
- If your baby ends up in NICU, if you cannot make it often, other family members maybe able to visit/cuddle your infant instead. Check the policy
- Students do not have to be involved in your care
- You can have anyone come with you to support you and your baby's care

DISCUSSION

What experiences have you had (positive or negative) that you would like to have more insight on?

What are your greatest fears about being pregnant and/or parenting?

What other suggestions do you have to share about having a positive experience, when being pregnant/parenting as a Black person?



TIPS

- If you feel like your rights have been violated, address it as soon as possible
 - At the source: With the offending clinician, the 'charge nurse' on shift, ask for 'second opinion', department head etc
 - No recourse? You can file a complaint with the offender's regulatory/ governing body:
 - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)
 - College of Midwives of Ontario (CmfO)
 - College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)
- Child Welfare: Contact the relevant agency early in pregnancy and explain your intentions to parent this child
 - Alternative: Kinship programs
- Social assistance programs, nutritional allowance etc.
- Ask providers if they can address key needs during pregnancy (e.g. accommodate late visit time, bring children to appointments, complete documentation for social assistance etc)
- Get a second opinion

You cannot be denied care from a facility if you make a complaint about a staffer, and/or refuse to take medical advice.

Thank You!

For more information on Birth Justice Workshops please contact:

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