



Standards of Competence for kahu pōkai | midwives

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Introduction to the Standards of Competence for kahu pōkai | midwives

Under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, one of the functions of Te Tatau o te Whare Kahu | Midwifery Council (the Midwifery Council) is to set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence (including competencies that will enable effective and respectful interaction with Māori), and ethical conduct to be observed by registered kahu pōkai | midwives.

These Standards of Competence, issued by the Midwifery Council, describe the standards of competence for the Midwifery profession in Aotearoa New Zealand at entry to the Register of Midwives. Kahu pōkai |midwives are expected to at least demonstrate their ability to meet these competencies but will likely exceed them over time. The Midwifery Council expects kahu pōkai |midwives to adhere to the Midwifery Professional Code of Conduct, the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, and Te Pae Ora Healthy Futures Act.

These Standards of Competence use the words “wahine”, “women” and “woman” throughout, reflecting the biology and identity of the majority of those who are childbearing. For the purposes of these Standards of Competence, these terms include girls and people whose gender does not correspond with their birth sex or who may have a non-binary identity. All those receiving care from a kahu pōkai | midwife should receive individualised, respectful care including the use of the gender nouns and pronouns they prefer.*

The word “whānau” is used in this document to recognise wāhine|women in their social context and to enable necessary care, beyond wahine|woman and pēpi | baby, when there is a direct effect on the health and wellbeing of the wahine|woman and pēpi | baby. The wahine|woman has the right to define who her whānau is and the extent of their involvement.

The performance indicators describe the actions the kahu pōkai | midwife undertakes to demonstrate they are meeting the expected standard of competence. They may be demonstrated in many ways through reflective and reflexive practice, sharing of information, critical thinking and reasoning, decision making, and the application of knowledge, skills and values to practice. They require the kahu pōkai | midwife to examine and apply strategies to mitigate impact of their own assumptions, biases and values when working alongside whānau.

Whānau

The word “whānau” is used in this document to recognise wāhine | women in their social context and to enable necessary care, beyond wāhine|woman and pēpi | baby, when there is a direct effect on the health and wellbeing of the wāhine | woman and pēpi | baby. The wāhine | woman has the right to define who her whānau is and the extent of their involvement.

* International Confederation of Midwives, Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice (2024), https://internationalmidwives.org/wp-content/uploads/EN_ICM-Essential-Competencies-for-Midwifery-Practice.pdf

The Attributes

The following attributes acknowledge a Te Ao Māori worldview. One or more attributes may apply to each performance indicator in the four standards of competence:

Kaiarahi – Leader by Example

When the Council uses this term, it refers to the provision of guidance and the right to exercise authority, ownership, and/or leadership.

Whakawhanaungatanga – Networker

When the Council uses this term, it refers to the process of establishing relationships and/or relating well to others.

Manaaki – Teacher and Advocate

When the Council uses this term, it refers to supporting, protecting, showing respect and care for others.

Tiaki – Compassionate Carer

When the Council uses this term, it refers to care and protection.

Atawhai – Reciprocal Learner

When the Council uses this term, it refers to showing kindness in learning.

The Standards of Competence for Midwives at a glance

Āhuru Mōwai

The kahu pōkai | midwife:

- Creates conditions, for those they provide care to, to feel culturally and clinically safe and have their choices respected across the pre-conceptual, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal continuum, including newborn care.
- Enables those they provide care to, to be the kaitiaki | guardian of their own health and wellbeing, to make informed choices about their pregnancy, birth experience and early parenthood.
- Honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi by embedding the principles of self-determination, equity, and partnership in their practise.

Mātauranga

The kahu pōkai | midwife:

- Applies comprehensive theoretical and scientific knowledge with the technical skills needed to provide effective and safe midwifery care, taking guidance from those they provide care to, to integrate their needs and aspirations.
- Integrates knowledge and understanding, personal, professional and clinical skills within a legal and ethical framework and in consideration of whānau worldviews to inform midwifery practice.
- Utilises midwifery skills that facilitate the physiological processes of childbirth and balances these with the judicious use of intervention when appropriate.

Te Iho

The kahu pōkai | midwife:

- Implements safe systems and quality assurance processes to ensure care is of the highest quality.
- Demonstrates the application of critical thinking to enable culturally and clinically safe care.
- Works in collaboration with the wider professional team to enable safe, timely and well-coordinated care.

Whenua

The kahu pōkai | midwife:

- Tends to their personal and professional needs to ensure they can engage effectively with whānau in the care provided.
- Is constantly refreshing knowledge through evidence and reflective practice, and learns alongside each whānau.
- As a member of the midwifery profession, has responsibilities to whānau, the profession and the wider community.
- Recognises their own strengths and limitations and seeks professional support when needed for professional development.

The Standards of Competence for Midwives in full

Standard of Competence	<h2>Āhuru Mōwai</h2> <p>A term that refers to the calm space or sheltered haven that protects the developing pēpi baby within the whare tangata womb</p>	
Explanation	<p>The kahu pōkai midwife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates conditions, for those they provide care to, to feel culturally and clinically safe and have their choices respected across the pre-conceptual, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal continuum, including newborn care. Enables those they provide care to, to be the kaitiaki guardians of their own health and wellbeing, to make informed choices about their pregnancy, birth experience and early parenthood. Embeds the principles of self-determination, equity, and partnership as a foundation of midwifery practice to improve health outcomes. 	
Performance Indicators	Ā1	Centres the wāhine woman and pēpi baby as the focus of care and adapts to all settings in which care is provided including community, primary, secondary or tertiary.
	Ā2	Recognises Māori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa and embeds the principles of self-determination, equity, and partnership into midwifery practice to strive to improve health outcomes.
	Ā3	Strives to mitigate the impact of the kahu pōkai midwife's own assumptions, biases and values when working alongside whānau.
	Ā4	Identifies and strives to mitigate systemic discrimination and prejudices experienced by different groups by providing midwifery care that meets ethical standards.
	Ā5	Integrates learning from cultural safety education to midwifery practice.
	Ā6	Recognises that cultural safety may include age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, socio-economic status, ethnic origin or migrant experiences, religious or spiritual belief, and disability.
	Ā7	Values diversity of knowledge and perspectives of physiological processes to inform assessments, planning and care.
	Ā8	Recognises the kahu pōkai midwife's role and responsibility for understanding, supporting and facilitating the physiological processes of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care.
	Ā9	Promotes and provides or supports continuity of midwifery care, including ensuring other health professionals have the information they require to provide continuity of care, and ensuring those involved understand the roles and responsibilities of providers where their care has been consulted on or transferred.
	Ā10	Provides current, evidence-based information and supports those they provide care to, alongside their whānau, to understand their options and make informed decisions, and advocate for the decisions they make.
	Ā11	Understands and respects the rights, of those they provide care to, to decline treatment or referral to another health professional.
	Ā12	Communicates effectively, through active listening, by engagement in reciprocal relationships and in ensuring information is understood.

Performance Indicators

Ā13	Documents effectively and appropriately, in a timely way, using different mediums.
Ā14	Documents decision-making, rationales for care provided, care planning and information shared with wāhine women and whānau that reflects their needs and aspirations.
Ā15	Keeps health information secure, private, and confidential in accordance with legal obligations.
Ā16	Recognises when those they provide care to and their whānau are at risk of violence and abuse, identifies the necessity for referral and refers to appropriate agencies when required.
Ā17	Promotes safe care, including identifying and reporting situations which may place the wāhine woman or other practitioners' health and safety at risk.
Ā18	Follows recommended guidelines to mitigate risks and to follow best practice.

Standard of Competence	<h2>Mātauranga</h2> <p>A term that refers to traditional tangata whenua knowledge, underpinned by unique philosophies. Worldviews are the systems of knowledge and their associated philosophies derived from all societies.</p>	
Explanation	<p>The kahu pōkai midwife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies comprehensive theoretical and scientific knowledge, with the technical skills needed to provide effective and safe midwifery care, taking guidance from those they provide care to and their whānau to integrate their needs and aspirations. <li>• Integrates knowledge and understanding, personal, professional and clinical skills within a legal and ethical framework and in consideration of whānau worldviews to inform midwifery practice. <li>• Utilises midwifery skills that facilitate the physiological processes of childbirth and balances these with the judicious use of intervention when appropriate. 	
Performance Indicators	M1	Acknowledges the experience of those they provide care to. Integrates this with midwifery skills and knowledge to honour whānau worldviews and facilitate the ability of wāhine women to achieve their physiological potential throughout their childbearing experience.
	M2	Pre-conception and health screening, identifying risk factors and providing advice for family planning, updating immunisations and dietary interventions.
	M3	Confirms pregnancy (if necessary), orders and interprets relevant investigative and diagnostic tests, carries out necessary screening procedures, and systematically collects comprehensive information concerning the health and wellbeing of wāhine women.
	M4	Provides information, to those they provide care to, to enable them to make informed choices on antenatal and newborn immunisations. Where appropriate, engages in education to ensure safe prescribing and administration of immunisations and/or refers as appropriate.
	M5	Provides evidence-based information, to those they provide care to and their whānau, on sexual and reproductive health and rights including prevention of sexually transmitted infections, long-acting reversible contraception. Engages in education to ensure safe prescribing and administration of contraception or refers as appropriate.
	M6	Applies critical thinking, integrating knowledge, skills and experiences, observations and information, integrated with the choices and needs of those they provide care to, to assess, diagnose, treat and plan care.
	M7	Conducts and documents comprehensive and timely evidence-based assessments for the purpose of monitoring the health and wellbeing of wāhine women in pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, birthing and postnatally.
	M8	Identifies conditions and initiates treatment for wāhine women during pregnancy, labour and birth and postnatal period within the Midwifery Scope of Practice.
	M9	Evaluates the effectiveness of treatments and care.
	M10	Recognises any condition, in those they provide care to, which necessitates consultation with, or referral to, another health professional according to referral guidelines, and is responsible for ongoing midwifery care.
	M11	Recognises and responds to any indication of difficulty and any emergency situation with timely and appropriate intervention.

Performance Indicators

M12	Recognises complexity, responds and refers to appropriate colleagues, to enable timely care planning, interventions, escalation and provision of emergency care, when required.
M13	Is responsive to the needs of individuals and whānau who experience bereavement and grief. Ensures access to relevant support and refers where appropriate.
M14	Assesses the health and wellbeing of the newborn and takes all initiatives that may be necessary to stabilise the newborn.
M15	Proactively protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding whāngai ū, and newborn feeding.
M16	Regularly assesses the health and wellbeing of those they provide care to throughout the postnatal period.
M17	Identifies factors which indicate the necessity for consultation with, or referral to, another health practitioner.
M18	Demonstrates the ability to prescribe, supply, administer therapeutic products and monitor the effects, according to legal and regulatory parameters, with informed consent, safely and appropriately within the Midwifery Scope of Practice and relevant legislation.
M19	Performs a comprehensive postnatal final assessment of the wahine woman, at the conclusion of midwifery care, including sexual health, immunisation advice, and ongoing breastfeeding whāngai ū and newborn feeding support services.
M20	At the end of midwifery care, refers whānau to well woman services, well child tamariki ora services, health practitioners, and other necessary services for ongoing care.
M21	Provides accurate and timely written progress notes and relevant documented evidence of all information shared, informed decisions made and midwifery care offered and provided incorporating whānau needs and aspirations.
M22	Screens maternal mental health and wellbeing and refers to appropriate agencies where needed.
M23	Provides clinically and culturally safe care to, or refers, those who choose to have an abortion.

Standard of Competence	<h2>Te Iho</h2> <p>This is the umbilical cord that connects the pēpi baby to the wahine woman.</p>	
Explanation	<p>The kahu pōkai midwife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implements safe systems and quality assurance processes to ensure care is of the highest quality. <li>• Demonstrates the application of critical thinking to enable culturally and clinically safe care. <li>• Works in collaboration with the wider professional team to enable safe, timely and well-coordinated care. 	
Performance Indicators	<p>T1</p> <p>T2</p> <p>T3</p> <p>T4</p> <p>T5</p> <p>T6</p> <p>T7</p> <p>T8</p> <p>T9</p> <p>T10</p> <p>T11</p> <p>T12</p> <p>T13</p> <p>T14</p>	<p>Applies the principles of self-determination, equity, and partnership to promote safety within health systems.</p> <p>Accepts personal accountability to those they provide care to, to the midwifery profession, the community, and the wider regulatory and health system for their own midwifery practice.</p> <p>Acquires and maintains knowledge about local (and national, where appropriate) health and social organisations and providers that can enhance whānau health and the midwifery care provided.</p> <p>Participates as an effective member of the wider professional team and values the importance of relationships with other professionals to advocate for whānau and midwifery practice to enable timely, high quality care.</p> <p>Demonstrates understanding of relevant clinical guidelines and integrates these into practice to enable safe, timely and well-coordinated care across the childbearing continuum.</p> <p>Ensures those they provide care to understand the roles and responsibilities when care is consulted on, or transferred, with reference to referral guidelines.</p> <p>Responds to the needs of those they provide care to in relation to infertility, complicated pregnancy, unexpected outcomes, abortion, bereavement and grief. Refers to appropriate services and/or support.</p> <p>Facilitates resolution of complaints by consumers about their practise.</p> <p>Engages in review and restorative processes when there has been an event of harm, as defined by the individual and / or whānau and / or care providers, to heal, learn and improve.</p> <p>Supports wāhine women to make a timely and appropriate transition from midwifery care to other services, providing all necessary referrals.</p> <p>Upholds an individual's right to make an informed choice and give their informed consent.</p> <p>Provides information that is accessible and can be understood.</p> <p>Reviews informed consent decisions throughout care provision.</p> <p>Actively seeks feedback to provide responsive care.</p>

Standard of Competence	<h2>Whenua</h2> <p>This is a word for land and placenta. The placenta is delicate, complex, hardworking and crucial.</p>	
Explanation	<p>The kahu pōkai midwife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tends to their personal and professional needs to ensure they can engage effectively with whānau in the care provided. • Is constantly refreshing knowledge through evidence and reflective practice and learns alongside each whānau. • As a member of the midwifery profession, has responsibilities to whānau, the profession and the wider community. • Recognises their own strengths and limitations and seeks professional support when needed for professional development. 	
Performance Indicators	W1	Demonstrates the ability to provide care on their own professional responsibility throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period.
	W2	Articulates and adheres to professional and health sector codes, including the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, relevant legislation, standards and ethics to ensure optimal outcomes for those they provide care to.
	W3	Undertakes reflection on strategies to mitigate the impact of their own assumptions, biases and values when working alongside whānau.
	W4	Works in partnership with those they provide care to.
	W5	Engages in professional development to extend and increase opportunities for learning by being present with each whānau.
	W6	Participates in quality assurance processes and mechanisms that review midwifery practice and are aligned with Te Tatau o Te Whare Kahu Midwifery Council's quality framework.
	W7	Actively reflects on practise across the pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal continuum.
	W8	Actions measures to ensure sustainability of midwifery and the environment.
	W9	Supports midwifery ākonga midwifery students, new kahu pōkai midwives and colleagues to provide clinically and culturally safe care.
	W10	Competently and confidently supports whānau with bereavement and grief.
	W11	Plans for, and implements, professional growth and development for self, including engaging professional support when necessary.