



The Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative

Originally published in the *2006 Guide to a Healthy Birth*

The Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative is the foundation of our work at Choices in Childbirth, and is the core philosophy of the care providers listed in our Provider Network,

www.choicesinchildbirth.org/network

The First Consensus Initiative of the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services

Principles

The principles outlined below are an excerpt from the Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative. To read the full text of this document, please visit the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services website at www.motherfriendly.org

We Believe the Philosophical Cornerstones of Mother-Friendly Care to be as Follows:

Normalcy of the Birthing Process

- Birth is a normal, natural, and healthy process
- Women and babies have the inherent wisdom necessary for birth
- Babies are aware, sensitive human beings at the time of birth, and should be acknowledged and treated as such
- Breastfeeding provides the optimum nourishment for newborns and infants
- Birth can safely take place in hospitals, birth centers, and homes

- The midwifery model of care, which supports and protects the normal birth process, is the most appropriate for the majority of women during pregnancy and birth

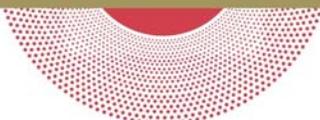
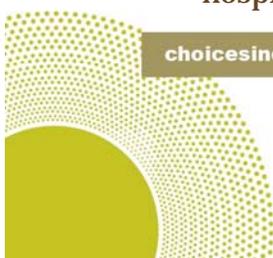
Empowerment

- A woman's confidence and ability to give birth and to care for her baby are enhanced or diminished by every person who gives her care, and by the environment in which she gives birth
- A mother and baby are distinct yet interdependent during pregnancy, birth, and infancy. Their interconnected-ness is vital and must be respected
- Pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period are milestone events in the continuum of life. These experiences profoundly affect women, babies, fathers, and families, and have important and long-lasting effects on society

Autonomy

Every woman should have the right to:

- Have a healthy and joyous birth experience for herself and her family, regardless of her age or circumstances
- Give birth as she wishes in an environment in which she feels nurtured and secure, and her



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emotional well-being, privacy, and personal preferences are respected

- Have access to the full range of options for pregnancy, birth, and nurturing her baby, and to accurate information on all available birthing sites, caregivers, and practices
- Receive accurate and up-to-date information about the benefits and risks of all procedures, drugs, and tests suggested for use during pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period, with the rights to informed consent and informed refusal
- Receive support for making informed choices about what is best for her and her baby based on her individual values and beliefs

Do No Harm

- Interventions should not be applied routinely during pregnancy, birth, or the postpartum period. Many standard medical tests, procedures, technologies, and drugs carry risks to both mother and baby, and should be avoided in the absence of specific scientific indications for their use
- If complications arise during pregnancy, birth, or the postpartum period, medical treatments should be evidence-based

- Each caregiver is responsible for the quality of care she or he provides
- Maternity care practice should be based on the needs of the caregiver or provider, but solely on the needs of the mother and child
- Each hospital and birth center is responsible for the periodic review and evaluation, according to current scientific evidence, of the effectiveness, risks and rates of use of its medical procedures for mothers and babies
- Society, through both its government and the public health establishment, is responsible for ensuring access to maternity services for all women, and for monitoring the quality of those services
- Individuals are ultimately responsible for making informed choices about the health care they and their babies receive

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To learn more about the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services and to read their excellent report, *Evidence for the Ten Steps of Mother-Friendly Care*, visit www.MotherFriendly.org

Responsibility

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