



The Swedish Association
of Midwives

Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives



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Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives (2018)

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Reference Group

The Swedish Association of Midwives Educational Council

Kompetensbeskrivning för legitimerad barnmorska (2018)

Svenska Barnmorskeförbundet

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PREFACE

The main task of The Swedish Association of Midwives is to promote the professional development of the midwife and to pursue knowledge development and research within the midwife's field of competence and activity. The association's mission includes reproductive-, perinatal-, and sexual health from a human rights perspective with a particular focus on women's and children's health.

The Swedish Association of Midwives is responsible for the Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives. The description in this way expresses the association's recommendations regarding knowledge, skill, ability and approach.

It is our hope that the Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives will prove to be a welcome support both for the individual midwife in the independent practice of their profession as well as within health- and medical care efforts to develop local competence models and responsibility descriptions for registered midwives.

Our ambition is that the document will also provide a support for employers and operations managers charged with ultimate responsibility of ensuring correct competency in the workplace, and finally to contributing to developing the midwife educational programme.

The Swedish Association of Midwives' Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives assumes an overarching perspective and therefore does not contain a detailed description of professional tasks.

The Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives (2018) has been composed by a steering group, working group, and a reference group.

The Swedish Association of Midwives would like to thank all midwives for their valuable contributions and offers a special gratitude to the project leader, Mia Barimani.

Stockholm, May 14, 2018

Mia Ahlberg
Chair of The Swedish Association of Midwives



DESCRIPTION OF REQUIRED COMPETENCES FOR REGISTERED MIDWIVES

The Swedish midwife has an independent job within a wide occupational field and encounters people of all ages throughout life. The Midwife's profession primary task is caring for the woman, the child and the family. It also include adolescents, young adults, and older women.

The Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives is meant to contribute to the provision of safe and high-quality care for the patient by clarifying the midwife's role, her professional competence, and her responsibility within Swedish health and medical care. The Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives provides a support for educational institutions in their development of the educational programme for midwives as well as for decision makers and operative managers within health and medical care.

The foundation for the description of competence is the midwife's international code of ethics, which respects women as persons with complete human rights, seeks justice for all human beings and equality regarding healthcare access, is based on mutual respect and trust, and respects the value of every human being.

Also fundamental to the description of competence is the Higher Education Ordinance, the European Professional Qualifications Directive for Midwives and the international definition of a midwife, subject description, and approach (International Confederation of Midwives, Core Documents).



THE REGISTERED MIDWIFE'S COMPETENCE

A nurse's license is the foundation of the professional degree of Midwife.

The midwife's educational programme consists of 90 advanced level course credits.

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare issues licenses after completion and passing of the midwife's programme. Registered midwives have an exclusive right to the profession.

The professional title of midwife is a protected title according to the Patient Safety Act, which means that those registered for the profession can only use it.

The profession of the midwife requires a significant degree of independent work, a scientific approach, multicultural knowledge, and professional responsibility. Further education is required for midwives for some specialist activities. The registered midwife has a personal responsibility for their professional development and their knowledge.

The work of the midwife should be based on science as well as proven experience and be carried out in accordance with current statutes (laws, ordinances, regulations).

The registered midwife works within the competence area of reproductive, perinatal, and sexual health. This include many different occupational fields and forms of care, and the professional tasks are highly variable.

Reproductive, Perinatal, and Sexual Health

Reproductive, perinatal, and sexual health is an independent competence area for midwives. The competence area includes an ethical approach, organisation and management, research, development and education, health promoting and preventative measures, as well as supervision of different conditions.

The main area belongs to human reproduction. Studies within the subject generate knowledge of: the physical, psychological, social, cultural, and existential process connected to pregnancy, labour and birth, postnatal, breastfeeding, the neonatal period, parenting, sexuality, fertility, abortion, anticonception and the menopause, as well as women's reproductive and sexual health in a life cycle, gender, and human rights perspective.

Reproductive, perinatal, and sexual health includes knowledge about health-promoting measures, preventative health and medical care as well as caring and therapeutic work.

Research within reproductive, perinatal, and sexual health should explain, broaden or deepen understanding of relevant questions.



Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Sexual and reproductive health influences the personal relations and sexual activities of every human being throughout their life.

Sexual health indicates a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing related to sexuality – not merely the absence of illness, dysfunction, or infirmity. Sexual rights include the right of all humans to make decisions about their own body and sexuality.

Reproductive health means a state of complete physical, psychological, and social wellbeing regarding the reproductive systems and all its functions — not merely the absence of illness. Reproductive rights embrace the specific individual's right to determine the number of their children and the time interval there should be between the births.

Every human being should be able to claim these rights without risk of discrimination, violence or coercion.

Source: Basis for National Strategy for Sexual- and Reproductive Health and Rights, The National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden (2014). Health: Physical, psychological, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of illness or injury. Based on the WHO's definition of health. Source: List of Terminology, the National Board of Health and Welfare (2018).

Integrated definition of sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being.

All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right.



Description of Required Competences for Registered Midwives

Achieving sexual and reproductive health relies on realizing sexual and reproductive rights, which are based on the human rights of all individuals to:

- have their bodily integrity, privacy and personal autonomy respected
- freely define their own sexuality, including sexual orientation and gender identity and expression
- decide whether and when to be sexually active
- choose their sexual partners
- have safe and pleasurable sexual experiences
- decide whether, when and whom to marry
- decide whether, when and by what means to have a child or children, and how many children to have
- have access over their lifetimes to the information, resources, services and support necessary to achieve all the above, free from discrimination, coercion, exploitation and violence

Source: *Guttmacher — Lancet Commission*
Accelerate Progress: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All
— Executive Summary (2018)



Definitions

Throughout this document, the designation 'patient' will be used, regardless of the branch of operations and form of care that the person is placed in. A patient is a person who receives or is registered to receive health- and medical care. Where relevant, the patient's partner is also included in the term.

In accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) the term 'postnatal period' in this document refers to the health of both the mother and the child during the first six weeks following delivery.

In the document, management of different conditions is defined as the midwife's independent responsibility to identify, assess, treat, inform, provide counsel and care as well as evaluate given care.



The Midwife's Area of Competence — Reproductive, Perinatal, and Sexual Health

The Area of Competence — Reproductive-, Perinatal-, and Sexual Health		
Ethical approach Organization and management Research, development, and education Health promotion and prevention Management of different conditions	Reproductive- and Perinatal Health	
	Normal and complicated pregnancy, labour and birth, and postnatal period The healthy and the sick new-born Breastfeeding Parenting	Sexual Health
		Puberty Fertility/Infertility Preconception Contraception Abortion Sexually transmitted infections The menopause Sexuality Gynaecological health and sickness

Figure 1 The midwife's area of competence, reproductive, perinatal, and sexual health. The concept of competence includes knowledge, skill, ability, and attitude, and an ethical and evidence-based approach runs through all fields.



Ethical Approach

The midwife's work is based on the universal human right to autonomy and justice, and in all circumstances respects human rights. Furthermore, the midwife practices the ethical code of the profession, which based on mutual respect and trust and respects the unique value of every human being. The midwife possesses cultural competence and a norm-conscious attitude.

The midwife possesses the competence to:

- offer care and treatment according to the principle of human value: all humans possess equal value and the same rights regardless of personal abilities and functions in society
- attend to the psychological, physical, and emotional needs of the patient seeking healthcare, regardless of their circumstances
- satisfy the patient's right to autonomy and participation in the care process
- support the patient's self-image, dignity, integrity, and autonomy by using dialogue as a means for creating trust, participation, and equality.



Organisation and Management

The midwife participates in processes within and between the profession, other occupations, functions, levels, activities and areas of responsibility as well as between caregivers and authorities. The midwife consults and refers to others when the patient's need for care is not covered by the midwife's area of competence. The midwife is responsible for record keeping and the transfer of information within health- and medical care. The midwife provides safe and high-quality care and ensures that the assets are distributed fairly concerning availability and priorities.

The midwife possesses the competence to:

- ensure patient-safe, person-centred, equal, available, and continuous care
- adapt the care provided according to the individual needs of the patient
- cooperate within the profession with other professions and specialists in a team
- consult and refer when necessary
- lead, prioritise, and coordinate the work
- work according to laws, statutes, ordinances, and general advice within health- and medical care
- report the risk for care related injuries and events that have resulted in, or had the potential to result in, care-related injuries
- establish a patient record, use standardised methods for safe information transfer and reporting
- handle pharmaceuticals in a safe manner based on prescription and the pharmaceuticals' mechanisms of action, effects, interactions and side effects
- handle healthcare-technical activities and medical-technical equipment used in the course of profession activities
- be responsible for the correct and purposeful use of medical equipment
- assess hygienic aspects and follow hygienic guidelines



Research, Development, and Education

The midwife possesses the competence to work according to an evidence-based approach and participates in research, development, and education. The midwife analyses strengths and weaknesses in their own professional competence and continuously develops their professional knowledge.

The midwife possesses the competence to

- analyse and critically evaluate routines and documents within their occupational field
- initiate and participate in the effort to evaluate and apply local guidelines
- participate in research and efforts to ensure quality enhancement
- participate in ensuring the clinical implementation and utilisation of scientific results
- manage supervisory and educational activities on group- and individual levels aimed at colleagues, students and patients
- assess students in occupational placement education

Health Promotion and prevention

The midwife works in a health-promoting and preventing manner on an individual as well as on a group and societal level. The midwife works in a health-promoting manner by strengthening the patient's own ability to both increase control over her or his own health and maintain psychological, physical, and social wellbeing. The midwife works in a health-promoting manner by preventing the development of illness and injuries as well as physical, psychological, or societal problems that may contribute to ill health. This also includes the identification and active prevention of health risks. To prevent complications means to identify physiological and psychosocial risk factors and conditions.

The midwife possesses the competence to:

- work in a health promoting and preventing manner from a lifecycle perspective
- bring up an anamnesis and status as a foundation for the identification of risk factors and assess and plan for the individual's care needs.
- promote continuity and the patient's participation in care
- strengthen the patient's ability to carry out their health-promoting measures and self-care by satisfying the need for knowledge and information
- include relatives in consultation with the patient
- promote good lifestyle choices from a lifecycle perspective



- detect domestic violence (physical, psychological, and sexual abuse) including honour-related violence and oppression
- prevent and identify the use of, and addiction to, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs/substances
- identify psychological illness
- inform about preventative measures regarding sexually transmitted infections
- inform about and carry out screening for cervical cancer
- promote the normal process during pregnancy, labour and birth, the postnatal period, and breastfeeding, as well as the bonding and interaction between parents and children
- identify fear of childbirth and tokophobia
- offer support, individually and in a group, in preparation for labour and birth and parenthood
- supply parent-supporting efforts to patients with specific needs
- promote breastfeeding and inform about the health benefits of breastfeeding for both the woman and the child
- inform about the new-born behaviour and needs
- promote skin-to-skin contact with the child following birth
- perform screening during pregnancy, labour and birth, and the neonatal period
- identify needs as well as inform and offer advice regarding sexuality, coexistence and contraception
- promote sexual health and prevent sexual ill health

Management of Different Conditions

The midwife identifies, assesses, treats, informs, provides counsel and care as well as evaluates given care. The midwife manages pregnancy, labour and birth, and the postnatal period as well as the general condition of the patient related to their sexual health in a lifecycle perspective. The midwife possesses the competence to judge independently if a situation falls outside the norm, and consults and cooperates with other professions when necessary. The midwife is ready to act in the event of emergency situations and complications that may arise and is skilled in assessing the seriousness of the situation. The midwife understands the importance of acting swiftly, can assess what measures should be utilised, and when the need arises can apply adequate measures.



Specifically, reproductive and perinatal health:

The midwife possesses the competence to:

- manage a normal pregnancy, labour and birth and postnatal period independently
- manage the monitoring of the foetus during pregnancy and labour and birth
- identify irregularities and complications during pregnancy, labour and birth, and the post-natal period
- manage a complicated pregnancy, labour and birth, and postnatal period in cooperation with other professions
- identify, appraise, and handle emergency conditions and complications
- inform about foetal diagnostics
- assess and provide support in the case of tokophobia
- assess and provide support as well as plan care in the case of psychological infirmity
- identify violence in close relationships and plan for continued management/support and care
- identify addiction to tobacco, alcohol, drugs/substances, and plan for continued supervision/support and care
- assess variations in physical and psychological levels of functioning and plan care needs
- assess the progress of the pregnancy and identify irregularities as well as appraise the need for care measures
- manage pharmacological/non-pharmacological pain relief as well as inform about pain relief methods and their effects and side effects
- handle instrument assisted as well as manual labour and birth operations, e.g. completion of vacuum-assisted or forceps labour and birth
- assist during planned and acute caesarean sections
- perform perineotomy
- assess the condition of the neonate and carry out an Apgar-test
- carry out a primary health examination of the neonate
- take care of the asphyxiated neonate and perform neonatal cardiopulmonary resuscitation
- detect vaginal tears and pelvic floor injuries, provide pain relief before examination, suture injuries of the first and second degree as well as perineotomy
- assist with the initiation of breastfeeding and adapt the care provided to the individual's needs during the establishment of breastfeeding
- identify and assess breastfeeding- and breast-complications
- assess the child's need for support and provide such in the case of rearing by means other than breastfeeding/breastmilk



- supply care and support in connection with intrauterine foetal death and neonatal mortality
- identify and assess the need for a follow-up regarding breastfeeding, psychological and physical health, pelvic floor injuries, sexuality and cohabitation, and contraception

Specifically, Sexual Health

The midwife possesses the competence to:

- carry out a gynaecological examination as well as identifying irregularities
- inform and offer advice regarding contraceptive methods and medication
- prescribe contraceptives to healthy women for the purpose of birth control
- apply intrauterine and intradermal contraceptives
- carry out tests and counselling regarding sexually transferrable infections
- inform about treatment, infection tracking, and laws, as well as prescribe medication and provide treatment in the case of some conditions/diagnoses
- inform about hormonal changes and sexual health in connection with the climacteric and the menopause
- inform about abortion methods
- provide care in the case of spontaneous abortion
- provide care in the case of induced abortion
- identify and provide care in the case of abortion complications
- inform about sterilisation
- inform about treatment in the case of infertility
- inform and provide advice about gynaecological conditions and diseases
- supply care in the case of gynaecological ill health and illness



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