

NEW YORK CITY
STANDARDS FOR

RESPECTFUL CARE at BIRTH





These standards were created to **inform**, **educate** and **support** people giving birth – people like you. These standards encourage you to know your human rights and be active decision-makers in your

birthing experience. These standards are also helpful for providers, and can help them respect and be aware of their patients' human rights during pregnancy, labor and childbirth.

You have a human right to respectful, safe and quality care during your birthing experience.

Human rights are those rights all people have to make their own decisions and live their lives with dignity. They are different from civil rights and do not always receive the legal protections they deserve. Health care providers and hospitals differ in how well they respect your human rights.

While this is not a legal document, we encourage you to share and discuss this information with your current or potential health care providers, and take a tour of their facility. This will allow you to learn about their policies and practices before you decide with whom and where to give birth.



EDUCATION



**INFORMED
CONSENT**



DECISION-MAKING



QUALITY OF CARE



SUPPORT



**DIGNITY AND
NONDISCRIMINATION**

For more information, search for **SRJ** at nyc.gov/health.

EDUCATION

You deserve to ask for and receive simple information that you can easily understand about your health care, health care provider and birthing experience options. This includes information about the following:



- 1 Obstetricians, gynecologists, midwives, doulas or family medicine doctors, and their qualifications and professional experience
- 2 Options for where to give birth, such as a hospital, a birthing center or your home
- 3 The policies and practices of the place where you choose to give birth
- 4 Resources to prepare for childbirth and feeding your baby, such as childbirth education classes and nursing counselors
- 5 A description of all possible outcomes of birth for you and your baby
- 6 Information and referrals for benefits and services you may need, such as housing, food, legal support and health insurance*

QUALITY OF CARE

You deserve the highest-quality health care. This includes:

- 1 Timely attention to your needs, including taking your pain level seriously, for your entire stay at a hospital or birthing center, or during the birthing experience at your home
- 2 A safe and clean environment during your labor and delivery, and a quiet and safe room after you give birth
- 3 Providers who are trained and skilled in current best practices for care during pregnancy and childbirth
- 4 Courteous staff who introduce themselves when they enter the room. If you have a negative experience or do not feel comfortable with a staff member for any reason (e.g., behavior, skill or experience level, etc.), you can ask for and receive a different staff member



DECISION-MAKING

You deserve to decide what happens with your body and to make decisions for your baby. This includes:

- 1 Making health care choices, such as which medical procedures you will and will not allow to be performed on you, based on your values, religion and beliefs
- 2 Deciding where to give birth, whether at a hospital, birthing center or your home
- 3 Choosing how to feed your baby – whether with breastfeeding/chest feeding, formula or a combination of both – and receiving the help you need to feed your baby
- 4 Holding your baby immediately after birth (also known as skin-to-skin), even if you have had a C-section
- 5 Making choices about the care of your baby, such as whether or not to be with your baby for their medical tests and procedures (unless there is a medical reason not to) and where your baby stays (in the same room with you or in the nursery)
- 6 Having your decisions documented and that you understand their associated possible risks



INFORMED CONSENT

You deserve to know and make your own decisions about all of your medical procedures. This is called “informed consent” and is a legal right.** Providers should share accurate, judgment-free explanations and information in a language you can understand so that you can make the decision that is right for you, when you are ready. After you have made your decision, you have the right to change your mind and have your new decisions respected – even if your health care provider disagrees with you. Informed consent includes:

- 1 Your health care provider’s recommendations about procedures, tests, treatments or drugs
- 2 Any risks, benefits and alternative procedures

DIGNITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION



You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect during pregnancy, labor and childbirth, as well as after childbirth – no matter what.*** This means health care providers are expected to:

- 1 Treat you and your family fairly, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, HIV status, immigration status, housing status, income level or form of insurance
- 2 Provide an interpreter so that you can understand your health care provider and they can understand you
- 3 Protect your privacy and keep your medical information confidential
- 4 Let you decide who you do and do not want in the room, including staff members, during exams and procedures, and respect this decision
- 5 Ask for and use the name and gender pronouns you prefer
- 6 Use the name and gender pronouns you use to refer to your baby
- 7 Respect the decisions you have made about your family, such as whether you have a spouse or partner, what your spouse’s or partner’s gender is, how many children you have, or if you have chosen to place a baby for adoption
- 8 Acknowledge concerns or complaints you may have about your health care, and give you information about how to file a complaint about any aspect of your care

SUPPORT

You deserve to receive support during pregnancy, labor and childbirth, as well as after childbirth. This includes:

- 1 Having the people you choose present during delivery and other procedures, such as your partner, family members, friends or doula (a trained professional who provides information and support before, during and shortly after childbirth)
- 2 Receiving information, counseling and support services if you experience depression after giving birth (also known as postpartum depression)
- 3 Receiving information, counseling and support services for you and your family if you experience a miscarriage, stillbirth or loss of an infant



*If you would like to sign up for public benefit programs, call 311 for more information. **If you believe your right to informed consent has been violated, you should contact an attorney who specializes in personal injury. The New York City Bar Association has a legal referral service that may be able to help you find an attorney by calling 212-626-7373. ***If you believe you have been mistreated or denied care or services because of your gender, your pregnancy or any other protected category under the New York City Human Rights Law, call 311 or 718-722-3131 to file a complaint with the New York City Commission on Human Rights.

This document was informed by community gatherings and created by the New York City Health Department's **Sexual and Reproductive Justice Community Engagement Group** (SRJ CEG). For more information, search for **SRJ** at **nyc.gov/health**.

As part of a commitment to sexual and reproductive justice, SRJ CEG works to promote birth justice. **Birth justice** exists when everyone has the freedom and support to make decisions about pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum with dignity. This includes access to high-quality, culturally responsive care, freedom to choose where and with whom to give birth, and the ability to accept or decline medical interventions.