HOW TO CHOOSE A MIDWIFE

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Midwife

- What is your background, training, and experience?
- If you apprenticed, how long was your training, and with whom? How many births did you manage as primary care provider with your senior midwife observing (or supervising)?
- How many births have you attended as the most knowledgeable primary caregiver since the completion of your training?
- Why are you a midwife? What is your general philosophy of birth? Do you encourage family/father participation?
- What are your expectations of me regarding self-care in pregnancy?
- What is your communications system? Do you use a pager or cell phone? If not, how do I reach you? Are you on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week? If not, who will take your calls?
- Do you have a limit on the number of births you attend each month?
- What would happen if two labors were in process simultaneously? Have you ever missed a birth?
- Do you work alone or with a partner? Do you have assistants? What are their qualifications? Who attends the actual birth? (A good midwife usually tries to work with a partner and/or assistant(s) in case of a double emergency where both mother and child need special care at once.)
- Do you provide postpartum visits in the early days after birth? When? How many? For how long am I entitled to postpartum care? Do you provide a final six-week checkup?
- What equipment do you normally use at births? What do you carry with you for emergencies? What do you not carry with you?
- Do you have current CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) and NRP (neonatal resuscitation program) certifications? What complications have you seen and handled? How would you handle the following: hemorrhage; cord around the baby's neck; baby not breathing spontaneously; cord prolapse?
- Do you have adequate medical backup? Do you rely on a particular physician or hospital? What are your privileges in the hospital setting? Can I choose my own physician? What about pediatric backup?
- What hospital do you use for transports? How are you usually treated at the hospital? Will you be able to continue labor support there if we should have to go in?
- Do you do VBACs (vaginal birth after cesarean) at home? If so, what is your outcome ratio? Do you have physician backup for VBACs?
- What is your fee? Do you require payment in full by a certain time in pregnancy? What about payment plans? What does your fee include and which fees are separate (e.g., prenatal care, lab work, childbirth preparation classes, nutritional counseling, newborn assessment, breastfeeding support, postpartum care, birth control counseling)? Do you require me to participate in any extra tests or services? If so, what are the costs? (Note: It is advisable to research basic hospital charges in your area, including normal and cesarean birth.)
- Are you eligible for third-party reimbursements from insurance companies? If so, which ones?
- What other costs might I/we incur? (Note: In case of transport, physician and hospital fees will be additional charges. Do not expect your midwife to refund your fee. She has done your prenatal care, has seen you through your labor, and will still tend to your postpartum care.)
- In the event of transport, how much does your backup physician charge? Does he or she require routine prenatal consultation? If so, what is the fee?

After interviewing a prospective midwife, you might want to reflect on the overall feeling you get from talking to her. Do you like her? Are you comfortable with her and her assistants? Can you be honest with her? Can you trust her judgment while feeling free to make your own decisions? You might want to interview several midwives before deciding to choose a caregiver for your birth. www.mana.org