

Home Birth Supplies Program of British Columbia: Program Summary

Program Background

In January 2015, the Midwifery Master Agreement with the BC Ministry of Health included the establishment of a new home birth supplies, medications, and data collection program. The Home Birth Supplies Program (HBSP) came into effect on April 1, 2016 and is a standardized provincial program for all care providers attending home births to access supplies, medications, and sterilization services. Perinatal Services BC (PSBC) manages the HBSP Advisory Committee which includes representation from each health authority and reports up to the PSBC Steering Committee. The objectives of the program include developing a standardized process to access supplies, medication, equipment, and reprocessing services; improving cost efficiencies due to bulk ordering of supplies; sterilization of instruments to meet provincial standards, and the provision of timely and accurate home birth data for health authority (HA) and provincial planning purposes.

Prior to the creation of the HBSP, midwives could bill the provincial Medical Services Plan (MSP) with two billing codes to support the provision of home births. In 2015/16 the codes were as follows: 36046 HB supplies \$101.08 and 36047 HB medications \$50.54. These codes did not adequately compensate the care providers for the costs associated with home birth. In addition, this model did not provide care providers with access to the prescription medications required to provide quality care. With the onset of the HBSP, these codes were eliminated and the financial responsibility for supporting the supplies and medication needs for home births was shifted to the health authorities.

History and Rationale for Using the Product Distribution Centre

The Product Distribution Centre (PDC) is a Health Canada licensed, full-service inventory management and distribution facility established by the BC Government for use by governmental agencies. The facility includes a dispensing pharmacy and a 50,000 square foot warehouse that supplies and ships various health and safety related products. The Product Distribution Centre (PDC) provides customized supply, inventory management, warehousing, distribution, and related goods procurement services for the HBSP.

The PDC was determined to be the most cost-effective and comprehensive option available when the program was established, and it integrates well with the health authorities' invoicing and payment systems. The PDC is a member of HealthPro Canada and therefore the PDC has access to national buying power and HealthPro contracts. The PDC was also determined to offer the most convenient option as they would ship directly to care providers and the most reliable access to supplies thereby avoiding service interruptions. Accessing disposable supplies and medications through the hospitals was not deemed feasible due upon the inception of the program to logistical and administrative challenges.

The HBSP Advisory Committee provides instruction to the PDC as required under the "Access Agreement," which was signed by each health authority. The PDC sends monthly summary reports and invoices of all home birth orders to the Health Authority for monitoring and payment. The HBSP Advisory Committee is responsible for approving any changes to the PDC's HBSP Catalogue including additional supplies, medications or equipment. The additional benefit of the PDC is the HBSP Advisory

Committee's ability to add or remove items from the shopping cart as guidelines change. Health authorities (HA) under the terms of the PDC Access Agreement are bound to commitments including responsibilities for redundant stock as defined in the agreement and responsibilities in relation to costs if the agreement is terminated.

Product Distribution Centre Costs for the HBSP

- In 2017/18, there were 1460 home births in BC.
- There were 312 PDC accounts created for the HBSP in 2016/17 and this increased to 343 total PDC accounts in BC in 2017/18. Each care provider offering home birth services in the province has their own account. Registered Midwives are currently the only professional holding accounts.
- The average cost of PDC home birth supplies was \$296.30 per home birth in BC for 2017/18.
- The average annual PDC home birth supply cost per PDC account in BC decreased from \$2,259.66 in 2016/17 to \$1,261.21 in 2017/18. This decrease is attributed to a reduction in purchases of reusable equipment after the initial program start up.

The PDC home birth supply costs described above do not include all costs associated with home births in BC. This only includes PDC costs which include medication costs, disposable equipment costs, and reusable equipment costs. Other costs associated with home births that were excluded are instrument repair, replacement and reprocessing; provision of and refilling of two oxygen tanks per care provider; emergency transfers and hospital-based care after transfer; and program administration. Still, there are demonstrated cost savings associated with home births ^{1,2}

¹ Janssen PA, Mitton C, Aghajanian J. Costs of Planned Home vs. Hospital Birth in British Columbia Attended by Registered Midwives and Physicians. 2015. PLoS ONE 10(7): e0133524.

Products Available to Care Providers through the HBSP

When the program was set up two important items were excluded in order to contain costs. However, inclusion of these items is being assessed for this program and would be recommended to other programs.

- Scale to weight infants
- Medical bag to carry the equipment and supplies

Additional Considerations

1. Insurance for Equipment and Supplies
2. Process for Reusable Equipment Maintenance and Repairs
3. Development of Standardized Order Lists
 - a. for new care providers joining the program
 - b. for supplies provided to birthing families in preparation for the birth

Detailed HBSP Program Description

Detailed program information, including policies and procedures, can be found at:

<http://www.perinataleservicesbc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/home-birth-supplies-program>

These webpages include further information related to the other components of the program:

- instruments (birth, suture, and UVC bundles and reprocessing)
- oxygen (provision of tanks and refilling)
- record submission

Contact Information

Lisa Sutherland RM, IBCLC
Midwifery Lead, Perinatal Services British Columbia
lsutherland@cw.bc.ca

² Schroeder E, Petrou S, Patel N, Hollowell J, Puddicombe D, Redshaw M, et al. Cost effectiveness of alternative planned places of birth in woman at low risk of complications: evidence from the Birthplace in England national prospective cohort study. 2012. BMJ: 344:e2292.