

Birthing Center Culture Report

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Description of culture

Birthing centers are healthcare facilities designed to provide a safe and comfortable environment for childbirth. "Birthing centers provide patients with a homelike atmosphere, which can reduce stress and promote relaxation during the laboring period. "Birthing centers are typically staffed by midwives who offer individualized patient care throughout the antepartum period, labor and delivery, and postpartum periods" (American Association of Birth Centers, 2024, p.1).

Birthing centers usually accommodate those who prefer a natural childbirth experience without the use of pharmacological intervention, and candidates for low-risk pregnancies. "If you have a higher-risk pregnancy, such as hypertension, diabetes or gestational diabetes, breeched baby, pregnant with multiples, or other issues that may cause complications, a birth center isn't the right option for you" (Brown, 2022, p.1); this is one example of how birthing centers differ from hospitals. "Delivering at a birth center and giving birth at a hospital differ in several ways, while a labor room in a hospital looks like, well, a room in a hospital, birthing rooms at a birthing center tend to be a little more comfortable. And procedures that are standard or at least common in a hospital setting (such as [continuous fetal monitoring](#), [routine IVs](#) , and [induction of labor](#)) aren't routine at a birthing center" (Brown, 2022, p.1). "Birthing centers are beneficial as they can improve the populations health; by reducing the number of c-sections, providing the neonate with better care as the midwife can be more hands-on, and by creating a family-centered environment (American Association of Birth Centers, 2024, p.1)". Throughout Champaign County there are currently no birthing centers; furthermore, "Illinois still has only 2 free-standing birthing centers in the entire state, and only one accepts Medicaid, further limiting options for many families" (Etilstaging, 2021, P.1).

Religion

Patients who aspire to give birth in a birthing center are allowed to follow their beliefs while receiving care. Beliefs can vary widely; some individuals may have specific beliefs or practices that influence their choices regarding childbirth. Birthing centers are accommodating and courteous of different religions and cultural practices. Patients in birthing centers share the belief of believing in natural childbirth. Women in birthing centers believe that childbirth is a natural process that the body should handle without the intervention of medication. Women in birthing centers prefer to experience the birthing process without the use of epidurals, C-sections, induction of labor, and pain medications. Women also believe in the importance of having a healthy and supportive environment. The medical staff at the birthing centers performs a fantastic job of giving patients complete control over the birthing process. Women are free to move around, select how they want to give birth, and advocate for themselves to ensure they have a pleasant pregnancy experience (Ourbirthingcenter, 2024, p.1). These beliefs relate to healthcare by emphasizing the importance of a non-stressful and successful childbirth, these beliefs also focus on providing patients with patient-centered care and informed decision-making. Women in birthing centers are typically supported by female midwives, however there are male midwives. The preference of gender is ultimately up to the patient, women often seek healthcare providers who accept and support their decisions.

Healing beliefs and practices

Women in birthing centers often view pain and suffering during childbirth as a natural and manageable experience. Women in birthing centers abide by a holistic approach regarding childbirth, focusing on nonpharmacological pain techniques such as water births or water therapy, breathing exercises, aromatherapy, positioning, and meditation. (West Suburban Medical Center, 2022). During the labor and delivery period, birthing centers focus on natural pain management, physical and emotional support, and a specific birth plan that is based on the woman's preference for the delivery of her baby. The postpartum period consists of the midwives encouraging skin-to-skin, breastfeeding support, involvement of the family, and additional holistic care (Pregnancy Birth and Baby, 2019, p.1). "Your midwife will care for both you and your baby [immediately after the birth](#). The midwife, or your doctor, will check whether you have [lost too much blood](#) or need [stitches](#)" (Pregnancy Birth and Baby, 2019, p.1) "Midwives assist with helping you with [breastfeeding](#) and baby showing you how to [bathe your baby](#) and [change nappies](#) administering pain relief if needed (or organizing a doctor to provide it) and carrying out some routine health tests, such as [newborn screening](#)" (Pregnancy Birth and Baby, 2019, p.1).

After birth midwives perform prenatal care for the mom, along with monitoring the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the mother and newborn. Midwives also carry the job of providing the patient with individualized education and continuous hands-on assistance while caring for the newborn. "Patients at Birthing Centers can be discharged as soon as two hours after delivery and no later than 24 hours after delivery. Typical discharge is 4-6 hours after delivery, with the idea that sticking around really isn't necessary — or desirable — if you and your baby are doing well. Actual discharge time will be determined by your care

provider based on your individual circumstances. We will arrange for a postpartum RN to come to your home 24-48 hours after delivery to see how things are going, and to perform certain required newborn screening tests” (Ourbirthingcenter, 2024, p.1). Providing support throughout the birthing process before and after creates a nurturing, positive, and empowering childbirth experience for the mother, midwife, and baby.

Family life and communication

Women who give birth in birthing centers usually have a great support coming from their families and friends. "It's totally up to you to decide who and how many people will be present during labor and delivery. Unlike the hospital experience, you're not limited to a certain number (and kids won't get the automatic boot when it's time for you to push)" (Brown, 2022, p.1).

Family members of birthing center patients play a supportive and active role in the childbirth process. Elders and parents of the patient are typically involved, and they provide emotional and physical support. Families also participate in assisting with newborn care and advocating for the patient's birth plan ensuring her wishes are respected. Overall, the preference for family structure and communication amongst others solely depends on the ethnic culture the patient is a part of. Unless culturally specified, women are allowed to speak to strangers without their husbands communicating for them. In birthing centers, both verbal and nonverbal communication play a role in ensuring patient-centered care. Verbal communication includes active listening, therapeutic communication, and encouragement which are all beneficial in providing the client with reassurance. Nonverbal communication includes relaxed body language, gentle touch such as massage, eye contact unless it is contraindicated for the patient based upon culture, facial

expressions, and companionship. Non-verbal and verbal communication techniques are used to establish a supportive and effective way of communication for the patient and family.

Diet

Birthing centers typically allow patients to eat whatever they want. Birthing centers offer light snacks and drinks such as soups, fruit, yogurt, water or Gatorade, and crackers (Hobbs, 2023, p.1). Birthing centers also allow patients to bring or make their own food. "Birth centers usually have **kitchens** where you can store or prepare food" (Babycenter, 2021, P.1). Certain foods that are eaten after the birth of the child primarily depends on the patients' culture or preference. Patients are welcome to supply their own food to eat after delivery. Culturally specified diet requirements can impact hospitalization in several ways. Some patients may need food that complies with their religious diet such as kosher, or vegetarian diets. Certain cultures may also prefer their food to be prepared a specific way. "Serving food that is unacceptable for health requirements or for moral, cultural, or religious reasons can exacerbate the discomfort of illness or hospitalization. The provision of equal care to all patients therefore requires that hospitals adjust the types and preparation of foods offered to patients in a manner that is sensitive to moral, health, cultural, and religious context" (Weinberg, 2023, p.1).

Description of core values

Core values relating to the childbearing experience in birthing centers include empowerment, reduced medical interventions, and lower-risk complications. Women are more in control during the birthing experience which makes them feel empowered and allows them to have a more fulfilling experience. With birthing centers providing patients with a natural process of childbirth, this reduces medical interventions which can help promote faster recovery and alleviate the risk of complications. While caring for patients in birthing centers this nursing

student would suggest promoting a calm and relaxing environment, engaging in active listening, and respecting the individual's preferences and beliefs. “Designing a welcoming and supportive environment for expectant families, cultivating strong communication skills to build trust with your clients, and clear communication is vital for ensuring that clients feel informed, supported, and involved in their care” (Midwiferybusinessconsultation, 2023, p.1). Respecting patient choices and providing information that empowers them to make informed decisions about their birthing experience; are important suggestions when caring for patients in birthing centers.

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