Informed Consent Agreement

“Informed consent is the process by which the treating health care provider discloses appropriate information to a competent patient so that the patient may make a voluntary choice to accept or refuse treatment. It originates from the legal and ethical right the patient has to direct what happens to her body and from the ethical duty of the physician to involve the patient in her health care.”

-De Bord, 2014, University of Washington School of Medicine

*Informed Consent*

This means in terms of homebirth midwifery in addition to the above that you, the birthing person, are expected to accept greater personal responsibility for your own and your baby's well being. You are part of your own birth team. In a homebirth, you are conscious and aware, unlike in surgery which is what the above definition mostly refers too, so the “permission granted in the full knowledge of possible consequences” is usually something that you will be asked about as an event is happening and often verbal consent may be obtained from you. This means you can have talked about a procedure with your midwife beforehand, but at the last minute still change your mind. Or verbally agree in the moment.

If you are unsure of what is the best choice for you in the moment, or are not able to give clear consent due to physical or mental impairment, then by signing this agreement it means you are giving over your decision to your midwife (who will consult your spouse/partner/family if appropriate) and agreeing to the plan that she/he determines is right for you at the time. This includes procedures that fall under what is expected of a midwife (following MANA and NARM guidelines) with their specific training, and/or transport to a hospital possibly via ambulance, the cost of which you (or you health insurance) will be responsible for.

The general concept of “full knowledge of the possible risks and benefits” remains the same. That's because it refers to the choice of homebirth as a whole. You can always decide to go to the hospital at any point, that is always up to you. However, when you choose homebirth you make an honest commitment to be at home for the birth of your baby and to do all you can to be in the best of health throughout your pregnancy to maximize the best potential outcome for you and your newborn. To be a good candidate for homebirth you must take that commitment very seriously!

Having “full knowledge of the possible risks and benefits” means:

\*You have done research about birthing at home and feel it is right for you.

\*You believe you are healthy enough to be considered “low risk” and are willing to make life style changes if needed to stay that way.

\*You have discussed this choice with the important people in your life.

\*You have interviewed all the midwives you would like to.

\*You are happy with your choice in midwives.

\*You have asked your midwife(s) all the questions you have wanted to, and gotten clear and complete answers. (If not, ask again!)

\*You believe in the philosophy of homebirth.

\*You trust in your body and know that homebirth is the right choice for you.

\*And above all, you must clearly and completely understand that nature is fallible. Sometimes even in the best of circumstances something can go tragically wrong. Women and babies can and do die or become seriously injured before/during and after childbirth.

This happens in all birth settings: in your home, or at a free standing birth center, or a hospital.

No matter where, such a sad event can never be taken lightly. Please trust that this is always on your midwife/doctor/birth attendant's mind, so once you have wrangled with this truth, and come to terms with it, hopefully it will no longer be on yours. Let us be aware for you. Know if something changes from safe at home to needing emergency medical support is part of our job. As is also to inform you of our concerns and your risks/benefits as they may change. You however still, are always in charge of your body. You have the ultimate say.

At a homebirth you may have delayed access to more advanced medical care. That does not necessarily mean homebirth is more risky than birth in other settings. Planned homebirth for a healthy woman attended by an experienced midwife has not been proven to have any worse outcomes than hospital birth, in fact most studies support the contrary. However, it is still important you understand all the risks and benefits of the birth setting you choose. It is vital that you consider any fears you may have concerning out of hospital, natural birth before you make the choice to birth at home. Homebirth is not for everyone. But, for those who are sure that the benefits (i.e. peaceful familiar environment, no constant interruption, less intervention, your own choice of birthing position, no exposure to pathogens not found in your home, etc.) out weigh the risks for them, and they understand both risks and benefits clearly, then homebirth is the right choice for those people.

If you understand clearly and completely, and agree with the above please sign below indicating that you give your fully informed consent regarding homebirth and in home midwifery care.

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I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on this date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ give my full informed consent knowing in complete the risks and benefits of homebirth and midwifery care.