

# Social perinatal care..



Aims to support child health and development by **addressing social determinants of health** from conception onwards and ensuring equal opportunities early on in the lifecourse. This approach to health care specifically targets families experiencing **multiple and complex vulnerabilities**. It combines medical monitoring of pregnancy and early childhood with **educational and psychosocial support** for the mother and her family.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Who?

The social perinatal care approach is beneficial for all women and families, but especially for those who experience multiple complex vulnerabilities including:

- Financial insecurity
- Domestic or family violence
- Single parent household
- Complex immigration background
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse or dependency issues

## Why?

All aspects of a woman's and family's life can have an impact on the course of pregnancy, infant-parent attachment and the overall development of the child. Every unmet social determinant of health, every trauma experienced, and every threat to human rights, weakens a mother's capacity to care for her baby. Adverse pregnancy conditions have demonstrated health consequences at birth and over the lifecourse.

Social perinatal care promotes the creation of healthy and safe environments for the mother and child from the onset of pregnancy. Through this approach to care, the baby's health and development are improved, and the support the family receives early on continues to have durable, sustainable effects on the child and family's health and wellbeing.

## How?

Social perinatal care is based on several principles that ensure better support to families and their children.

**The relationship** – between worker, clients, team members, and family members – is the primary intervention tool. The warm welcome helps build relationships with families and **promote human and person-centered care services**.

**The interdisciplinary approach** is essential to address the complexity of situations and vulnerability factors encountered by mothers and families. Health care is essential during pregnancy, childbirth, and the early years of a child's life. Psychosocial services complement this health monitoring and ensure **a comprehensive follow-up of the family**. An interdisciplinary team may include, for example:

-  **Midwife**
-  **Family doctor**
-  **Nurse**
-  **Social worker**
-  **Specialized educator or psychoeducator**

**The collective intelligence of an interdisciplinary team** encourages the team to question practices and provide flexible solutions adapted to the specific needs of each family.

**Efficient social perinatal care** is integrated into the healthcare system while maintaining close connections within the community, neighborhood community resources, as well as specialized resources such as secondary and tertiary care. The expressed intent is to put the family at the centre of a community that can provide all the necessary timely care and support. Flexibility and cultural sensitivity are key in each intervention. **It is up to the system to adapt to families**, not for them to comply with services that we think are best for them.

**Social perinatal care provides families with the support they need while respecting their autonomy**. Through portage/empowerment, women are accepted as they are, while their sufferings and needs are heard from the onset of pregnancy. They can lean on us, when needed, and therefore stand strong as they raise their child. Equally important is the recognition of the strengths and courage of women and families to **gain confidence and capacity to act**. The family remains the expert in their child's growth, needs and preferences.

### Other summary sheets to read

-  Interdisciplinarity
-  Portage/empowerment
-  Proximity work

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about social  
perinatality, visit  
[maisonbleue.info](https://maisonbleue.info)

(1) Definition of the scientific committee of La Maison Bleue.