

PERINATAL SERIOUS ILLNESS ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

As parents it can be normal to feel overwhelmed and at a loss when you are told your baby may have special healthcare needs or may not survive. Canuck Place Children's Hospice provides specialized care services for babies and children with serious illnesses anticipated to have a shortened life or care/treatment of a condition with uncertainty.

We work together with your other healthcare providers to support you and your family over weeks to months to prepare for the birth of your baby.

Advance Care Planning for Your Baby

The care plan is a document that is created with you and those healthcare providers who are integral in the care of the mother, baby and family. It involves a process that includes experts in maternal fetal medicine, pediatric and neonatal specialists, your primary care providers and pediatric palliative care specialists.

A birth and parenting plan is a way of conveying your wishes for your baby's birth and for the care of your baby and you. It can include preferences for labor and birth, such as pain relief for you, and goals after your baby's birth, such as ways to create memories together and include family and friends. You can also integrate your requests for your baby's medical care, outlining your preliminary decisions regarding evaluations and testing, medical interventions, managing possible symptoms and palliative care.

The benefits of a birth plan in a situation like yours are many and very real. It can help you think about the upcoming birth, understand your options, explore what other parents have chosen, and evaluate what will be important to you. The process of collaborating with your healthcare providers and putting your requests in writing can decrease your anxiety by ensuring that your wishes are clearly communicated. It can give you a sense of control in a situation where so many things may feel out of your control. It provides a structure so you and your family and healthcare team can work together to make your time with your baby as close to what you are envisioning as possible.

A birth plan can also benefit your caregivers in important ways. It offers a format for discussion and clarification about the birth process or your baby's condition. It ensures that all parties have similar information. A written document gives everyone a road map to follow together.

Canuck Place will be the team that works together with you and other healthcare providers to develop a care plan.

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If you have been referred to our service, the following supports are available to you:

- Creation of an Advance Care Plan:
 - Deciding which interventions may help and which may not
 - Ensuring comfort care and pain relief as high priorities
 - Relaying plans to the healthcare teams
 - Determining optimal locations of care
- Counseling regarding diagnosis, prognosis and treatment options
- Helping you emotionally prepare for your baby
- Helping ensure that Mom's healthcare needs are met
- Spiritual support
- Coordination of care with other services and providers
- Support and advice for relaying news to other family members, children and friends.
- Helping identify ceremonies that are important to you with regard to spiritual beliefs and opportunities to create memories (for example, footprints/handprints, photos and foot/hand moulds)
- Bereavement follow-up support and referral to other services