



International Childbirth Education Association

Practice Settings for the Childbirth Educator

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The ideal practice setting for a childbirth educator provides philosophical and physical attributes that include:

1. The freedom to teach a wide variety of options in childbirth, including a full range of alternatives from those available at a home birth to those found in tertiary care settings;
2. The ability to promote freedom of choice by the parents in terms of where, how, and with whom maternal/newborn care shall take place;
3. Encouragement to continue to grow and expand as a childbirth educator;
4. Class size limited to six to ten expectant mothers and their support persons;
5. Encouragement for the optional participation of labor support person(s) of the woman's choice;
6. Adequate physical surroundings, including room size, temperature, lighting, cleanliness, and availability of lavatories; as well as
7. Adequate teaching materials, including handouts, class text, and visual aids.

No practice setting is innately inappropriate except one that limits the ability of the childbirth educator to teach about freedom of choice and knowledge of alternatives in childbirth. Restrictions or controls placed on class content prevent fully informed decision-making by participants and may contribute to the increasing medicalization of childbirth and a dehumanization of birth for the woman and her family.

In choosing a practice setting each childbirth educator needs to consider whether it contributes to or conflicts with her philosophy and work ethics. Simultaneously, educators must be aware of the impact of the setting on the participants' views of the classes as related to professionalism, privacy, comfort, continuity, convenience, and credibility.