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**Disclosure of childhood sexual abuse – a new referral pathway for improved perinatal outcomes**

One in nine women presenting for prenatal care have experienced childhood sexual abuse (CSA), regardless of disclosure. Inadequate maternity care can adversely affect these women’s perinatal health outcomes. Evidence shows women with a history of childhood sexual abuse are at an increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, sexual re-traumatisation, and pre-term contractions. Currently in Australia, there are no screening processes or questions identifying childbearing women with a history of childhood sexual abuse.

This policy aims to provide these women with the appropriate care to improve their perinatal outcomes. A referral process and pathway would be created and implemented to triage these women to a specifically trained group of midwives. A midwifery-led continuity of care model is ideal in providing care for women with a history of childhood sexual abuse. This model has been shown to increase the chance of vaginal births, improve maternal satisfaction, and decrease interventions and preterm births. Within a continuity of care model, women with a history of childhood sexual abuse would receive trauma informed care from specifically trained midwives. A midwifery-led continuity of care model would benefit these women, as it would allow them to build trust with their continuity midwife, feel more in control during their labour and birth, and comfortable disclose past experiences.

This policy, involving a referral process and pathway to a continuity model would be the first of its kind in Australia and the first step to improving perinatal experiences and outcomes for women who disclose a history of childhood sexual abuse.

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