

## Alta. government to cover midwifery services

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CALGARY- The Alberta government announced this morning it will cover midwifery services beginning next April.

"This decision will provide better access and more choice for expectant women and will relieve pressure on doctors, nurses and hospitals," said Health Minister Ron Liepert, in a statement.

Previously, midwifery services were not publicly funded, making Alberta the only province to regulate midwives without paying for the service.

Alberta women who wanted to have a baby with the assistance of a midwife had to pay a \$3,500 fee.

Beginning April 1, 2009, pregnant women who want the services of a midwife will have the service covered and the option of delivering their child in hospital, at a birthing centre or at home.

The decision will cost government \$4 million in the first year.

Midwifery groups welcomed the announcement.

"It's going to make midwifery services available now to any woman who wants it regardless of whether or not she can afford it," said Diane Rach, chair of the Alberta Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee.

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