

What is an OGV ?

Obstetric and gynecological violence (OGV) refers to words, actions, behaviors or misconduct that occur during care related to pregnancy, childbirth or gynecological health. It can be experienced as hurtful, unfair, disrespectful, discriminatory or carried out without consent. OGV can harm the safety, dignity or well-being of the person subjected to it.

(Definition adapted from JusticeVOG)



Many people wonder whether their experience with obstetric or gynecological care was normal. They have doubts and, they seek understanding and validation.

Maybe you are asking yourself the same questions.

OGV is still widely unknown, but it exists, it causes harm, and it must stop.

Use this tool to reflect on your past or current healthcare experiences. If you feel it does not apply to your situation, maybe it could apply to someone around you ?

More and more voices are speaking out against obstetric and gynecological healthcare experiences that are not respectful of expressed needs, pain, or consent — whether given or not.

There is no compromise to be made when it comes to your rights.

We created this tool to help you :

- Put words to your lived experience
- Feel less lonely
- Help you validate your feelings and impressions
- Support you in your decisions
- Guide you towards resources

OGV is real : help and support are available.

Self-diagnostic tool

DID I EXPERIENCE OBSTETRICAL VIOLENCE ?

WHAT IS AN OV ?

Obstetric violence (OV) refers to a violence that occurs during obstetrical care, meaning during pregnancy checkups, childbirth or after giving birth. By « violence », we refer to actions, behaviors, words, errors and medical procedures that harm the physical, mental or psychological health of the person who experienced it.

IN THE CONTEXT OF A PREGNANCY CHECKUP, CHILD-BIRTH, A MISCARRIAGE OR AN ABORTION (TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY), HAS IT EVER HAPPENED THAT A HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL...

- 1. Refused to perform a procedure or test you requested without giving you any explanation or justification ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
- 2. Minimized, ignored or disbelieved the pain you reported ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
- 3. Refused to stop a procedure or relieve your pain despite your requests ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
- 4. Refused to allow you to be accompanied by a support person of your choice ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
- 5. Performed a medical procedure without any clear and precise explanations or without obtaining your consent ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
- 6. Pressured coerced or threatened you in any way ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
- 7. Forced you to take medication ? (For example, by strongly insisting or by adding it to an IV without informing you.)**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know

8. **Imposed the presence of a trainee, student, resident or intern without asking for your consent ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
9. **Shared or disclosed confidential information about your personal situation or your health without your consent ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
10. **Touched you without explaining what they were doing or asking for your consent ? (This could involve private areas or any other part of your body where the touch made you feel uncomfortable.)**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
11. **Made inappropriate, shaming, mocking, patronizing or humiliating comments about your preferences or choices related to the care you requested ?**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know
12. **Made discriminatory, stigmatizing or disregarding remarks about you? (For example, based on your weight, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, HIV status, origin, physical or mental health condition, migration status, social or financial situation.)**
◊ Yes ◊ No ◊ Maybe ◊ I don't know

If you answered « yes » to one or more of these questions, it is possible that you experienced actions, behaviors, comments or medical procedures that violated your rights or that may constitute a form of violence during pregnancy-related care.

YOUR RIGHTS DURING PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH AND HEALTHCARE

You always have the right :

- To **respect, dignity and autonomy**. You can make your own choices, even if they go against what others might think.
- To be **protected from all forms of violence** : non-consensual actions, humiliating comments, forced treatment, rough or unexplained procedure, etc.
- To **make your own choices** for your body, even if others do not agree.
- To **change your mind**, before or during a medical procedure.
- To **choose** the facility or healthcare professional you want for your care.
- To **change healthcare professionals** at any time without facing any negative consequences.
- To **say NO** to any intervention you don't understand or don't want – including during a procedure, a pregnancy checkup or childbirth.

When you are pregnant, no one can make decisions for you under the pretext of « protecting the fetus » as long as you are capable of making decisions for yourself.



CONSENT IS NOT OPTIONAL

You are the only person who can say **yes** or **no** to what happens to your body. For any treatment to be given, your **free and informed consent** is required :

- **Free** : without pressure, threats, manipulation or false information.
- **Informed** : with **all the necessary information**, given in a language you understand about the risk, benefits and alternatives.

■ You can change your mind at any time.

A FEW TIPS FOR ASSERTING YOUR RIGHTS

- You can **ask for every step or action to be explained before it is done.**
- You can ask to have **another person** with you (a support person, someone you trust, an interpreter etc.)
- You can **refuse an exam**, even if it's « recommended ».
- Medical protocols are **never more important than your consent.**
- You can request access to your **medical record** to understand what was done or said.
- You can **file a complaint** or seek help after a situation where care was disrespectful — or even violent.

■ You have the right to feel safe, respected and heard in all your obstetric healthcare experiences. No matter where you are (hospital, birth center, clinic or at home), your rights apply everywhere, at all times.

Legal remedies and support

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU EXPERIENCED OGV ?

There are several possible steps you can take to assert your rights :

COMPLAINT TO THE HEALTHCARE FACILITY

You can contact the **Complaints and Quality of Services Commissioner**. The complaint can be made orally or in writing (ideally in writing, with specific facts and supporting documents or studies). This process aims to improve care and prevent others from experiencing similar situations. The response may take several weeks and will be sent by mail. **If you are not satisfied with the response (the conclusion), you can take your complaint to the Ombudsperson (Protecteur du citoyen) to challenge it.**

COMPLAINT TO A PROFESSIONAL ORDER

If the person involved is a member of a **professional order** (doctor, nurse, midwife, physiotherapist, etc.), you can file a written complaint with that order. The disciplinary officer will review the situation. If the code of ethics was violated, the professional may face sanctions.



CIVIL COURTS

You can seek financial compensation if you are able to prove a fault, harm (damage), and a casual link between the two. This process can be costly and often requires medical expert opinion.

However, it is an important way to have the violence legally recognized and to help establish a **legal precedent**. This can lead to changes in the law and better protection for others.



CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

If a serious act occurred, you can file a **complaint with the police**, orally or in writing. The Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions (DCPP) will then decide whether to proceed with prosecution. Even if no prosecution takes place, you can apply for assistance from the **IVAC** (Compensation for Victims of Criminal Acts), which can offer psychological support and financial compensation.

If you want to learn more about the different remedies, procedures and possible outcomes, contact us :
info@naissancesrespectees.org
514 392-0308

— Useful resources



SUPPORT AND REFERRAL IN THE CONTEXT OF OGV

- **Regroupement Naissances Respectées (RNR)** : To learn more about OGV, your rights, your legal options and to receive support. info@naissancesrespectees.org / www.naissancesrespectees.org
- **Mouvement pour l'autonomie dans l'enfantement** : Information about your rights related to pregnancy. www.enfantement.org

CANADIAN RESOURCE FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND INDIVIDUALS

- **Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice** : www.reproductivejusticesurvivors.ca

SUPPORT TO FILE A COMPLAINT

- **CAAP** (Centres d'assistance et d'accompagnement aux plaintes) : Free and confidential service to help you file a complaint with a healthcare facility or the Complaints Commissioner. CAAP can support you through each step of the process. fcaap.ca



JUDICIAL SUPPORT

- **Centres de justice de proximité** : To help you understand your rights and judicial options, free and no appointment needed. justicedeproximite.qc.ca
- **CALACS** (Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel) : Support if you experienced sexual violence, including in a medical context. rqcalacs.qc.ca
- **CAVAC** (Centre d'aide aux victimes d'actes criminels) : To receive free and confidential frontline services if you've been a victim of a crime (such as forced or coerced sterilization). cavac.qc.ca
- <https://rightsandpregnancy.ca/> : Clear information about your right during pregnancy, birth and parenting.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- **Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances (FQPN)** : www.fqpn.qc.ca

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

- Several **community organizations that are members of the RNR** offer safe listening spaces and support following experiences of OGV. Check the directory to find one near you : www.naissancesrespectees.org/membres
- **Centres de femmes (Women's Center)** : Located in many regions of Québec. They offer listening, support, discussion groups, and referrals. Some staff members are trained to support you if you have experienced violence in a medical care context. Check the R des centres de femmes : www.rcentres.qc.ca
- **Réseau des centres de ressources périnatales du Québec** : The CRPs offer a range of services and activities for parents during the perinatal period, including support groups for perinatal grief or difficult experiences related to pregnancy or childbirth. www.rcrpq.com
- **Mental health professionals** : Some psychologists, sexologists, or trauma-informed therapists can help you process OGV. While OGV is still not widely recognized, some professionals are becoming more aware and adapting their care accordingly. If it is important to you that the professional you choose is well-informed about OGV, don't hesitate to ask them to specify their knowledge so you can decide whether to continue working with them. To find a psychologist : www.ordrepsy.qc.ca

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