

**Birth plans: the good, the bad, and the future.**

[Lothian J](#)

College of Nursing, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079, USA. lothiaju@shu.edu

**ABSTRACT**

A written birth plan encourages women to clarify desires and expectations and communicate with their providers to make a realistic plan for care during labor. Tension between health professionals and patients caused by birth plans reflects the larger problems with contemporary maternity care: conflicting beliefs about birth, what constitutes safe, effective care, and ethical issues related to informed consent and informed refusal. The focus of birth plans should be to answer three patient-focused questions: What will I do to stay confident and feel safe? What will I do to find comfort in response to my contractions? Who will support me through labor, and what will I need from them? In this article, the history and purposes of birth plans and approaches to resolving tensions will be discussed.