



Recent SOC Code Changes will Increase Visibility of CNMs, Improve Workforce Tracking

On January 21, 2009, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Federal Register notice (http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/legislative/soc_codes_2010.pdf) detailing its final decisions for revising the 2000 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) for 2010. For the first time ever, CNMs and CMs were included as their own separate category (rather than being bundled under Registered Nurses category). The changes included designating nurse-midwifery as its own broad and detailed group occupation.

What does this mean for CNMs and CMs? This is significant because the SOC is purposely designed to reflect the current occupational structure of the United States. It classifies all occupations in which work is performed for pay or profit. All Federal agencies that publish occupational data use the SOC as a way to compare occupations. State and local agencies are also strongly encouraged to use the SOC. The goal is to have a national system with a common language for categorizing and analyzing occupations. Until this revision, nurse-midwifery was not included as a separate occupation but was instead grouped under registered nurses. Clearly this had a negative impact because it made the occupation of nurse-midwifery invisible. The 2000 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by Federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. All workers are classified into one of over 820 occupations according to their occupational definition. To facilitate classification, occupations are combined to form 23 major groups, 96 minor groups, and 449 broad occupations. Each broad occupation includes detailed occupation(s) requiring similar job duties, skills, education, or experience. General questions concerning the SOC may be sent by [email](#) or faxed to 202-691-6444.

To make a change in the SOC involves a very long and detailed process. Requests are submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of the Federal government and the Standard Occupational Classification Policy Committee (SOCPC) up to five years prior to when the changes will be implemented. The SOCPC and OMB received more than 1200 public comments requesting specific changes to the 2010 SOC. Once requests are received they are grouped and categorized by a docket number. The request to identify nurse-midwives as a separate occupation and the SOCPC response is identified below.

“**Docket No. 08-0202** raised a question concerning the coding of Registered Nurses who practice as midwives, but are not trained as 29-1161 Nurse Midwives. The SOCPD determined these individuals would be classified in 29-1161 Nurse Midwives.

Classification Principle 2 states that occupations are classified based on work performed. Therefore if the work performed is that of a Nurse Midwife, the workers should be classified in the same occupation.”

This change is significant for all nurse-midwives because it makes what was once an essentially invisible occupation (invisible to those using SOC codes for data comparisons) to one that is visible. Nurse-midwifery now has the SOC code of: 29-1160 (Broad Grouping) Nurse-Midwives and 291161 (detailed grouping) Nurse-Midwives and we are found under 29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations 29-1000 Health Diagnosing and Treatment Practitioners.

The campaign to include nurse-midwives as a separate classification began with the work of Deanne Williams, CNM, MSN, FACNM and Lisa Summers, CNM, PhD, FACNM. It was continued through ACNM's representation on the Interagency Collaboration on Nursing Statistics, whose members include not only representatives from major professional organizations, but also members representing the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Visit the Bureau of Labor Statistics website to learn more about the SOC.
(www.bls.gov/soc)