

# New Mexico

## CERTIFIED NURSE-MIDWIVES IN NEW MEXICO

### Nurse-Midwifery in New Mexico

**Certified Nurse-Midwives are a crucial part of the health care workforce in New Mexico. Nurse-Midwifery combines the “two disciplines” of midwifery and nursing to serve a broad population of New Mexicans. Working in clinics, homes, hospitals, private offices and schools, CNMs care for pregnant women, their newborns and families, women in mid and later life as their personal health care issues change, and broader community health needs with a professional dedication to be “part of the solution” in a challenging health care environment.**

### Statistics

**There are currently 151 CNMs licensed and residing in NM, of whom 141 were working as a CNM or as a Nurse Practitioner at their last renewal of license. With few exceptions, their distributions follow the typical New Mexico pattern with most in the two major cities of Albuquerque or Las Cruces. There are, however, 21 other counties in which CNMs are practicing. CNMs attend approximately one-third of the births in the state, which may help explain why, even with a high poverty rate, New Mexico’s infant mortality rate is 6.1 per 1000 live births compared to 6.9 for the nation.**

### Education

The University of New Mexico Nurse-Midwifery education program is ranked third in the nation and emphasizes clinical education in rural and underserved areas. Almost one-third of the practicing CNMs in the state were graduated from the UNM program. CNM programs throughout the state and nation have served as clinical education sites for UNM Nurse-Midwifery students.

### Practice and Reimbursement Issues

**New Mexico law and regulations concerning CNMs are widely considered among the best in the United States, and they are often cited as model regulations. The first level of licensure is as a Registered Nurse as regulated by the New Mexico Board of Nursing; this licensure is required before anyone can apply to the NM Department of Health (DOH) for a second license as a CNM. The NM DOH regulations concerning CNMs acknowledge that CNMs are “licensed independent practitioners,” which means that their practice is “self-monitored” and not under any other health care provider’s supervision.**

### Current Issues

**NM Nurse-Midwives participate through their national organization, The American College of Nurse-Midwives, (ACNM) and the state chapter of ACNM in those public affairs issues that affect their practice, patient safety, and health care reform. The following are some of the issues concerning CNMs:**

- After much study sponsored by the NM Health Policy Commission, CNMs have joined with others to recommend that patient injuries in childbearing be compensated within an “administrative” system, rather than by a lawsuit system (tort law). The study was triggered by a loss of licensed obstetric providers in New Mexico, as professional liability insurance rates recently rose dramatically.
- CNMs, along with other care providers, are taking a leadership position in advocating for increased patient safety in childbearing. The same study that led to recommending a “no law-suit” system found that the same changes can help in designing safer health care.
- Credentialing in NM hospitals (where almost all CNM-attended births are) can be burdensome to CNMs and require out-dated “sponsorships” and restricted work rules that rob NM hospitals of the full use of CNMs allowed by NM regulations and national standards. In some cases, this can result in a barrier to CNM practice that leaves patients without access to quality care.
- Market factors within an industrial health model increasingly forces CNMs to place “productivity” above patient care and the midwifery model of care, leading to CNM dissatisfaction, patient dissatisfaction, and patient safety issues.
- The lack of a universal, inclusive health care system undermines the morale and optimal practice of CNMs, as well as

other health care provider colleagues.

This information was provided by the midwives in New Mexico.

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