



# POSITION STATEMENT

## CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY IN MIDWIFERY CARE

Midwives practice the principles of client safety when they provide care in order to decrease errors in the health care system. The Institute of Medicine<sup>1</sup> and The Joint Commission<sup>2</sup> have noted common errors in health care that place clients at risk for adverse events at the hands of health care providers. Adverse outcomes in perinatal health care result in significant physical, emotional, and financial costs for all.<sup>3</sup> For example, according to national data, 94% of births listed some type of pregnancy complication<sup>4</sup>. These complications are not just costly to mothers and families, they are costly to the healthcare system.

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) endorses the following principles to promote client safety and decrease the risk of adverse outcomes for women and infants during pregnancy, labor, and birth, and throughout a woman's lifespan.

**Principle #1: Care should be based on scientific knowledge about best practice.**

In the design of processes of care, ACNM strongly supports the use of evidence-based practice, professional standards and guidelines, and the identification of best practices. Evidence-based practice is the integration of the best research evidence with clinical expertise and client values. Syntheses of the evidence base and development of professional standards and guidelines for best practice should serve as the basis for valid and meaningful quality measures.

**Principle #2: Interdisciplinary team communication is a fundamental aspect of patient care.**

Communication errors currently account for the majority of preventable adverse outcomes in perinatal care.<sup>2,5</sup> ACNM encourages all midwives to strive to develop and implement strategies that foster open, effective, and ongoing communication among all team members.<sup>5,6</sup> This includes the use of standard abbreviations and nomenclature.<sup>5</sup> A formal mechanism should be established for transfer of care between providers.<sup>7,8</sup>

**Principle #3: Active involvement of patients and their families in care contributes to safe practice.**

ACNM supports holistic, patient-centered, relationship-based care that is inclusive and recognizes and values the importance of including patients and families as informed, collaborative and active participants in the care process considering this essential for the promotion of safe outcomes.<sup>9-11</sup>

**Principle #4: Participation in quality management programs increases safety.**

ACNM encourages midwives to participate in quality management programs to effectively evaluate and continuously improve clinical practice. Measures that improve the quality of care include but are not limited to process and outcome measurement and analysis of near misses, sentinel events, and root causes.<sup>2</sup>

ACNM recognizes that clinical practices and models of care may vary according to client needs and values and that health care can be safely and effectively delivered through a variety of practice models. The safety principles acknowledged in this statement transcend such preference-sensitive variation in practice and define common principles for midwives to follow in an ongoing commitment to provide safe and effective care. ACNM recommends that all midwives adopt these safety principles in an effort to reduce error and optimize outcomes for the families they serve. Midwives should remain current in their knowledge of best practice recommendations to ensure the delivery of safe, timely, effective, efficient, patient-centered, and equitable care.<sup>9-12</sup>

In addition, ACNM encourages midwives to become active in quality improvement research and policy development, with the goal of achieving a high-quality, high-value maternity care system.

## REFERENCES

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*Note.* Midwifery as used throughout this document refers to the education and practice of certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) or the American Midwifery Certification Board, Inc. (AMCB), formerly the American College of Nurse-Midwives Certification Council, Inc. (ACC).

Source: ACNM Board of Directors

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