



# POSITION STATEMENT

## Overview of Principles for Licensing and Regulating Midwives in United States

This position statement is a companion document to the position statement of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), “Principles for Licensing and Regulating Midwives in the United States in Accordance with the Global Standards of the International Confederation of Midwives.” That document provides an in-depth explanation of ACNM’s position on midwifery licensure and regulation in the United States in relation to the following standards published by the International Confederation of Midwives: “International Definition of the Midwife,”<sup>1</sup> “Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice,”<sup>2</sup> “Global Standards for Midwifery Education,”<sup>3</sup> and “Global Standards for Midwifery Regulation.”<sup>4</sup>

In the interest of public health and safety, any individual seeking to practice as a midwife in the United States should meet at a minimum the “International Definition of the Midwife”<sup>1</sup> and “Global Standards for Midwifery Education”<sup>3</sup> as defined by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM). Only pathways to midwifery practice that are consistent with these standards are sufficient to produce qualified licensed midwives. These standards include the following:

1. Completion of a midwifery education program consistent with ICM’s “Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice” and “Global Standards for Midwifery Education.”
2. Periodic external review of midwifery education programs. In the United States this is accomplished through accreditation by an organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).
3. Passing a national certification examination. Currently such examinations are offered by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) and the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM).
  - a. It is ACNM’s position that the certifying examination should be developed using processes approved by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE).
4. Licensure in the jurisdiction in which the midwife practices.

### Education

ICM education standards require periodic external review of program effectiveness by a nationally recognized organization. The purpose of this review is to assess whether an institution or program meets the standards necessary to grant academic qualification. In the United States, this external review function is performed by accrediting agencies recognized by the USDE.

The Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) and the Midwifery Education and Accreditation Council (MEAC) are currently the only accrediting agencies for midwifery education recognized by the USDE. The results of a 2013 gap analysis demonstrated that ACME accreditation criteria are consistent with ICM education standards.<sup>5</sup>

ICM education standards also require that midwifery curriculum include theory and practice elements under the instruction of faculty with formal preparation in teaching. Both ACME and MEAC ensure that the programs they accredit provide an appropriate mix of didactic and clinical components.

Laws governing midwifery practice must ensure that all midwives have graduated from a program accredited by an agency recognized by the USDE. If a pathway to midwifery has not been recognized by a USDE-approved agency, there is no assurance for faculty, students, certifying bodies, or the public that this pathway has met USDE criteria or those of the ICM.

### **Certification**

Midwifery licensure must require passage of a national certification examination developed using processes approved by the ICE. ACNM supports time-limited certification and defined continuing education requirements for recertification. Certifying bodies in the United States include AMCB and NARM. AMCB requires completion of an ACME-accredited graduate education program. NARM requires at least a high school diploma or equivalent and accepts candidates from MEAC-accredited programs and candidates who have completed NARM's Portfolio Evaluation Process (PEP). The PEP is a pathway to midwifery that has not been accredited by a USDE-recognized agency at the time of this writing.

A conflict of interest exists if a certifying body simultaneously defines and validates the educational path for individuals entering practice and also develops and administers the certifying examination. Certifying bodies should be distinct from and independent of educational pathways and accrediting agencies.<sup>6</sup>

### **Licensure and Regulation**

Licensure based on requirements consistent with ICM standards must be a precondition for midwifery practice. Policymakers should work with midwifery professional organizations to ensure that standards for midwifery licensure and regulation are consistent with ICM standards. In all states, the term "Licensed Midwife" should be defined in a manner consistent with the ICM standards.

Laws and regulations should support the ability of midwives to practice autonomously and obtain prescriptive authority within their scopes of practice, which is defined by the content of their education and certification examinations. Formal mechanisms should be provided to allow for expanded practice based upon the individual's demonstrated knowledge and skills. All health professionals should be encouraged to conduct ongoing peer review and outcomes measurement to evaluate and improve quality.

ACNM supports the development of boards of midwifery as the ultimate decision makers for midwifery licensure and practice. Policymakers should ensure equity in representation of

midwives on licensing and regulatory boards (eg, boards of midwifery or nursing). These regulatory boards should interface with maternity care teams and with boards of medicine and nursing.

## References

1. International Confederation of Midwives. International definition of the midwife. [http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/CD2011\\_001%20ENG%20Definition%20of%20the%20Midwife.pdf](http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/CD2011_001%20ENG%20Definition%20of%20the%20Midwife.pdf). Published June 15, 2011. Accessed March 17, 2014.
2. International Confederation of Midwives. Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice 2010. <http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/ICM%20Essential%20Competencies%20for%20Basic%20Midwifery%20Practice%202010,%20revised%202013.pdf>. Revised 2013. Accessed March 17, 2014.
3. International Confederation of Midwives. Global standards for midwifery education 2010. [http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/ICM%20Standards%20Guidelines\\_ammended2013.pdf](http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/ICM%20Standards%20Guidelines_ammended2013.pdf) Amended 2013. Accessed March 17, 2014.
4. International Confederation of Midwives. Global standards for midwifery regulation 2011. <http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/Global%20Standards%20Competencies%20Tools/English/GLOBAL%20STANDARDS%20FOR%20MIDWIFERY%20REGULATION%20ENG.pdf>. Published 2011. Accessed March 17, 2014.
5. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) gap analysis of ACME and ICM global education standards. <http://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000003821/Gap-Analysis-ACME-and-ICM-Global-Education-Standards.pdf>. Published February 14, 2013. Accessed March 17, 2014.
6. National Commission for Certifying Agencies. Standards for the Accreditation of Certifying Programs. 2004. <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/p/cm/ld/fid=15> Accessed March 24, 2014.
7. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Comparison of certified nurse-midwives, certified midwives, and certified professional midwives: clarifying the distinctions among professional midwifery credentials in the U.S. <http://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/cclibraryfiles/filename/000000001031/cnm%20cm%20cpm%20comparison%20chart%20march%202011.pdf>. Accessed March 17, 2014.

Developed collaboratively by the American College of Nurse-Midwives, the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education, and the American Midwifery Certification Board.  
Approved: March 2014.