



POSITION STATEMENT

Adolescent Health Care

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) supports the following measures to improve the health and well-being of adolescents in the United States:

- Legislation to increase school and community-based health education programs, including reproductive education and preventive health care information that are evidence-based and sensitive to societal and public health issues.
- Funding of government programs designed to improve access to care, including Title X (family planning), State Children's Health Insurance Program (reproductive health), school-based health clinics, and Title V block grants (maternal-child health).
- Program evaluation research to increase the practice of evidence-based, adolescent health care.
- Continued development, implementation, and integration of school and community-based programs that address prevention, recognition, and treatment of violence against women within a socio-cultural-political context.
- Provision of confidential services among adolescents, health care providers, and insurers that encourage family and peer involvement as appropriate to the health and social circumstances of the adolescent.
- Promotion of intergenerational models of care that emphasize education of the parents or parental figures of pre-adolescents and adolescents regarding communication, developmental changes, and positive health and lifestyle behaviors.
- Networking with other organizations to improve healthy behaviors in adolescents.
- Opposition to any limitations on access to essential services, such as sexually transmitted infection screening and treatment, family planning, including emergency contraception, mental health services, and sexual health education.
- Interdisciplinary educational initiatives to develop competent health care providers and services for pre-adolescents and adolescents and that take into account individual and unique developmental needs.

Background

Adolescence is a time of exploration and emerging independence and represents the transition from childhood to adulthood. As teens explore newly accessible options, they make lifestyle choices that may become the habits of a lifetime. Although most teens are healthy and safely transition into adulthood, teens face many risks, including sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, substance use, violence, abuse, and accidental trauma. One in 4 young women age 14-19 is infected with at least one sexually transmitted

infection,¹ 13% of sexually active women age 15-19 become pregnant each year, and of births to adolescents, nearly 20% are repeat births.² Forty percent of adolescents have used illegal drugs, 35% use alcohol, and 21% binge drink.³ Two thirds of all adolescent deaths are the result of accidental injury, self-harm, or violence.⁴

Despite these alarming statistics, adolescents remain one of the most underserved health care populations in the United States, and their health concerns may often be ignored. Adolescents are often uninsured or underinsured, and availability of appropriate services is very limited. Other barriers to access include out-of-pocket co-payments, limited transportation, lack of culturally appropriate care, and concerns about confidentiality. Education about healthy lifestyle is an important tool for prevention of health demoting behavior and illness among adolescents.

The Role of the Certified Nurse-Midwife/Certified Midwife

The midwifery model of care emphasizes education and family-centered care throughout the lifespan, which makes midwives ideal care providers for adolescent women. In addition, midwives offer important services to the parental figures of adolescents. The complex issues that face adolescents in today's society demand interdisciplinary attention, and certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) function well as part of the interdisciplinary team. Midwives promote healthy behaviors and facilitate the development of lifelong positive lifestyle choices. Midwifery care is culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate. Midwives respect the growing independence, privacy, and learning needs of the maturing woman.

As primary health care providers for women, midwives have the opportunity to provide intergenerational care and educate parental figures regarding changes and development unique to adolescents. Studies have indicated that communication between parents and pre-adolescents is key to promoting positive health behaviors.^{5,6} Furthermore, as providers of women's health across the lifespan, establishing midwifery care in adolescents affords the opportunity to foster long-term relationships that can continue into the childbearing years and beyond.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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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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