



POSITION STATEMENT

Social Justice

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) affirms the following:

- ACNM supports the human rights and dignity of all people by respecting their civil rights and providing support for individual choice.
- Structural racism contributes to health disparities, and the effects of racism coupled with the inherent benefits of white privilege need to be addressed in midwifery education and practice.
- To reduce health disparities, actions must be centered on the identified needs and desires of members of affected communities.
- Midwifery is a profession that inherently promotes activism and supports opportunities for collective social action.

Background

Social justice is a concept in which the distribution of resources is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure.¹ A primary barrier to social justice today is the disproportionate burdens on people of color caused by structural racism.

Structural racism is the combination of social forces, institutions, ideologies, and processes that interact with one another to generate and reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups.² It affects all areas of life, including political will and legal institutions, housing, education, employment opportunity, health care, and nutrition. In order to address the complexity of contributors to poor health and health disparities, recognition of the ongoing role of structural racism is essential.³ One example of structural racism is the starkly disparate maternal and infant morbidity and mortality rates in the United States.⁴

Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) recognize that the health and well-being of the families in their care are fundamentally rooted in the historical, social, and economic structure of the United States. Through a social justice approach, CNMs and CMs can attempt to eliminate white privilege and recognize that past and current injustices leads to poorer health. This commitment to social justice is in alignment with ACNM philosophy of care: “We believe every person has a right to: Equitable, ethical, accessible quality health care that promotes healing and health; health care that respects human dignity, individuality and diversity among groups.”⁵

REFERENCES

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3. Halfon N, Larson K, Lu M, Tullis E, Russ S. Lifecourse health development: past, present and future. *Matern Child Health J*. 2014;18(2):344-365. doi: 10.1007/s10995-013-1346-2.
4. Paradies Y, Ben J, Denson N, et al. Racism as a determinant of health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*. 2015;10(9):e0138511.
5. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Our philosophy of care. <http://www.midwife.org/Our-Philosophy-of-Care>. Accessed July 18, 2018.

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 (AMCB).

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