



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 23, 2010

Contact: Melissa Garvey
Office: (240) 485-1826
Email: mgarvey@acnm.org

LANDMARK HEALTH REFORM LAW TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO MIDWIFERY, BENEFIT WOMEN'S HEALTH

SILVER SPRING, MD - The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is pleased to announce that certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) have achieved equitable reimbursement for their services under Medicare. As of January 1, 2011, the CNM reimbursement rate will increase from 65% to 100% of the Medicare Part B fee schedule. This long-awaited provision is part of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed into law today by President Barack Obama.

“Inadequate reimbursement for midwifery services has been a significant barrier to women’s access to the valuable services of CNMs and certified midwives (CMs),” stated ACNM President Melissa Avery, CNM, PhD, FACNM, FAAN. “This legislation not only improves Medicare for women, but will encourage Medicaid plans and third-party payers to adopt equitable reimbursement policies for midwifery services.”

CNMs and CMs provide health care services to women of all ages and stand to play a vital role in increasing access to quality, affordable primary care, gynecology, family planning, and maternity care services. Equitable reimbursement will enhance the viability of midwifery practices as well as increase the incentive for hospital and physician practices to employ CNMs and CMs. In addition, CNM- and CM-attended births—which occur primarily in hospitals, but also in birth centers and private residences—are associated with high-quality outcomes and fewer cesarean sections. The US cesarean section rate has reached an all-time high of nearly 1 in 3 births; cesarean section has been identified as an overused maternity care intervention by the National Priorities Partnership, an influential multi-stakeholder coalition working to identify top priorities for improving the quality and affordability of health care in the US.

ACNM has supported comprehensive health care reform as a critical step toward eliminating health disparities and improving health care access for the millions of women who are currently uninsured. In addition to equitable reimbursement for midwives, the bill recognizes freestanding birth centers under Medicaid, improves access to women’s preventive health services, ensures direct access to the obstetrician/gynecologist or CNM/CM of their choice, takes significant steps to address the health care workforce needs of the nation, ends gender discrimination and exclusion based on pre-existing conditions, and begins the effort to reduce the rate of increase for medical malpractice insurance through state-focused initiatives. Learn more about how health reform benefits women and their families at www.midwife.org/health_care_reform.cfm.

“ACNM applauds President Obama and congressional leaders for recognizing that health reform is critical to our nation’s future,” Avery added. “ACNM is committed to the success of this effort and to working with other stakeholders to achieve the goal of quality, affordable health care for all.” Learn more about ACNM’s health reform principles at www.midwife.org/ACNMHealthReformPrinciples_000.pdf.

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For more information, please contact Melissa Garvey at (240) 485-1826 or via e-mail at mgarvey@acnm.org.

With roots dating to 1929, the American College of Nurse-Midwives is the oldest women's health care association in the U.S. ACNM's mission is to promote the health and well-being of women and newborns within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Midwives believe every individual has the right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations. More information about ACNM can be found at www.midwife.org.

8403 Colesville Road, Ste. 1550, Silver Spring, MD 20910-6374 • Phone: (240) 485-1800 • Fax: (240) 485-1818 • www.midwife.org