



COMPETENCIES FOR MASTER'S LEVEL MIDWIFERY EDUCATION

Introduction

The discipline of midwifery has a long and rich history of care to women and their families. To continue this tradition, those practicing midwifery have an obligation to remain responsive to changing health care needs in an increasingly complex health care environment. In order to develop knowledge, skills, and competencies that improve the health care and outcomes of women and newborns, the midwifery profession has determined that education for midwives must be at the graduate level.

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional organization for midwives educated directly in midwifery or dually in nursing and midwifery and is responsible through the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) for ensuring that high-quality education programs are available in midwifery. ACNM defines midwifery practice as “the independent management of women’s health care, focusing particularly on common primary care issues, family planning and gynecologic needs of women, pregnancy, childbirth, the postpartum period and the care of the newborn.”¹

ACNM, ACME and the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) all endorse a graduate-level degree as the basic preparation for midwifery practice. The ACNM Board of Directors has recognized the need to develop competencies for midwifery that reflect master’s education. All students must achieve the Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice, whether at the master’s or doctoral level. Because of the wide variety of master’s degrees offered in various education programs for midwives, a set of competencies for this level of education provides a standard and scope to which such programs must adhere. These master’s level educational competencies relate to the theme of integrating clinical midwifery practice with midwifery education, administration, research, public service or other related midwifery role. For students who enter a midwifery education program with a graduate level degree, it remains the purview of the program faculty to determine whether this degree meets the master’s level competencies for a midwife.

This document uses the International Confederation of Midwives definition of competency: “A combination of knowledge, professional behavior and specific skills that are demonstrated at a defined level of proficiency in the context of midwifery education and practice.”² These recommendations may be used to guide educators who are developing, revising, or enhancing midwifery educational programs and will be available to the ACME to inform the development of criteria for the accreditation of the master’s degree within programs in midwifery. The task force has agreed that such competencies should be flexible enough to reflect the variety of master’s degrees that midwives might earn, including, but not limited to, Master of Science in midwifery; Master of Science in nursing or nurse-midwifery; Master of Science in Nursing or Nurse-Midwifery; Master of Public Health.

Master's Level Midwifery Competencies

After successfully completing a basic midwifery education program and earning a master's degree from that program, or having already received an appropriate graduate-level degree, the graduate will be able to integrate the provision of midwifery care with midwifery education, administration, research, public service or other related midwifery role. To achieve that outcome, the graduate will be able to do the following:

1. Evaluate and apply expert clinical knowledge into best practice models utilizing relevant data to analyze midwifery outcomes.
2. Identify gaps between evidence and practice and consider potential solutions for bridging gaps.
3. Evaluate and utilize research to provide high quality, evidence- based health care, initiate change, and improve midwifery practice for women and newborns.
4. Analyze the process for health policy development, influential factors, and the impact of policy on clinical practice.
5. Participate as an effective team member to enhance team function and promote positive change in the health care of women and newborns.
6. Identify theories relevant to midwifery practice or scholarship.
7. Utilize information systems and other technologies to improve the quality and safety of health care for women and newborns.
8. Evaluate health care finance and identify appropriate use of resources for management of a health care practice.
9. Explore potential areas of interest in midwifery scholarship.

References

¹American College of Nurse Midwives. (2011) Definition of midwifery practice and scope of practice of certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Position statement.

<http://www.midwife.org/ACNM/files/ACNMLibraryData/UPLOADFILENAME/00000000266/Definition%20of%20Midwifery%20and%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20of%20CNMs%20and%20CMs%20Dec%202011.pdf>. Accessed October 8, 2014.

²International Confederation of Midwives. Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice 2010. (2011)

http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/resources/docs/standards/en/R430_ICM_2011_Essential_Competencies_2010_ENG.pdf. Accessed October 8, 2014.

Source: ACNM Master's Competency Task Force*

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*Task Force Members: Megan Arbour (Chair), Elaine Germano, Kathryn Harrod, Carol Howe, Shannon Keller, Ronnie Lichtman, Tonya Nicholson, Nicole Rouhana, Marian Seliquni, Melissa Willmarth-Stec.