



# DEFINITION OF MIDWIFERY AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF CERTIFIED NURSE-MIDWIVES AND CERTIFIED MIDWIVES

Midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives (CNMs®) and certified midwives (CMs®) encompasses a full range of primary health care services for women from adolescence beyond menopause. These services include the independent provision of primary care, gynecologic and family planning services, preconception care, care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period, care of the normal newborn during the first 28 days of life, and treatment of male partners for sexually transmitted infections. Midwives provide initial and ongoing comprehensive assessment, diagnosis and treatment. They conduct physical examinations; prescribe medications including controlled substances and contraceptive methods; admit, manage and discharge patients; order and interpret laboratory and diagnostic tests and order the use of medical devices. Midwifery care also includes health promotion, disease prevention, and individualized wellness education and counseling. These services are provided in partnership with women and families in diverse settings such as ambulatory care clinics, private offices, community and public health systems, homes, hospitals and birth centers.

CNMs are educated in two disciplines: midwifery and nursing. They earn graduate degrees, complete a midwifery education program accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME), and pass a national certification examination administered by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) to receive the professional designation of CNM. CMs are educated in the discipline of midwifery. They earn graduate degrees, meet health and science education requirements, complete a midwifery education program accredited by ACME, and pass the same national certification examination as CNMs to receive the professional designation of CM.

CNMs and CMs must demonstrate that they meet the *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice* of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) upon completion of their midwifery education programs and must practice in accordance with *ACNM Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*. ACNM competencies and standards are consistent with or exceed the global competencies and standards for the practice of midwifery as defined by the International Confederation of Midwives.<sup>1</sup> To maintain the designation of CNM or CM, midwives must be recertified every 5 years through AMCB and must meet specific continuing education requirements.

## REFERENCES

1. International Confederation of Midwives. Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice 2010. [http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/resources/docs/standards/en/R430\\_ICM\\_2011\\_Essential\\_Competencies\\_2010\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/resources/docs/standards/en/R430_ICM_2011_Essential_Competencies_2010_ENG.pdf). Published 2011. Accessed October 10, 2011.

Source: Division of Standards and Practice

Approved: ACNM Board of Directors, Dec. 2011

Updated: February 6, 2012

Replaces: Definition of Midwifery Position Statement, developed 1992, last revised 2004