

## Clinical Practice Guidelines

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The American College of Nurse-Midwives *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery* ([http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Standards\\_for\\_Practice\\_of\\_Midwifery\\_12\\_09.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Standards_for_Practice_of_Midwifery_12_09.pdf)) mandate the development of practice guidelines. Specifically, Standard V states that “midwifery care is based upon knowledge, skills, and judgments which are reflected in written practice guidelines.”

Though the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) publishes a number of clinical bulletins, clinical practice statements and handbooks that can assist midwives in the development of clinical practice guidelines, ACNM does not publish clinical practice guidelines. Rather, individual midwives and/or practices establish specific guidelines to describe the parameters for midwifery management, physician management and collaborative management that are appropriate for the individual clinician and practice setting. Practice guidelines are established for each specialty area, which include, but are not limited to, antepartum, intrapartum, postpartum/newborn, and family planning/gynecology.

ACNM is often asked for guidelines regarding client selection and management; e.g. *At what gestational age may a midwife care for a patient?* or *Must a client with twins (or diabetes or any number of conditions) be collaboratively managed or referred?* Such decisions – and the development of guidelines that address such decisions – are best made by the individual midwifery practice. In defining their scope of practice and the populations served, individual midwives will consider many factors, including:

- the clinical setting in which care is provided
- the skills and expertise of the individual midwife or midwives
- the skills and expertise of the consultant physician(s)

This document provides information about a variety of resources midwives might use in developing and updating clinical practice guidelines.

A note regarding terminology: *Protocol* is a term that describes research methodology or defines specific steps involved in a particular procedure (e.g., IUD insertion). *Clinical practice guidelines* is the preferred usage when referring to documents that guide clinical practice.

### Professional Documents

Several professional documents should be considered in developing clinical practice guidelines. These are available on the ACNM Web site, [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org).

- “Standards for the Practice of Midwifery”  
[http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Standards\\_for\\_Practice\\_of\\_Midwifery\\_12\\_09.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Standards_for_Practice_of_Midwifery_12_09.pdf)
- Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice  
[http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Core\\_Competencies\\_6\\_07.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Core_Competencies_6_07.pdf)
- “Collaborative Management in Midwifery Practice for Medical, Gynecological, and Obstetrical Conditions” – Clinical Practice Committee, ACNM, Aug. 1997 *This document includes definitions of consultation, collaboration and referral.*  
[http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/Collaborative\\_Mgmt\\_05.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/Collaborative_Mgmt_05.pdf)

- Joint Statement of Practice Relations between Obstetrician/Gynecologists and Certified Nurse-Midwives/Certified Midwives” – ACNM and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), Oct. 1, 2002  
[http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/Joint\\_Statement\\_05.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/Joint_Statement_05.pdf)
- Clinical Bulletins (*members only*)  
[http://www.midwife.org/clinical\\_bulletin.cfm](http://www.midwife.org/clinical_bulletin.cfm)
- Other Related Position Statements  
<http://www.midwife.org/position.cfm>

### **Sample Formats for Policies/Practice Guidelines**

Available from ShopACNM: a tool/checklist for midwives to individualize their own guidelines. The sample formats are included on disk to ease insertion of individualized policies/practice guidelines.  
(<http://acnm.stores.yahoo.net/samforforpol.html>)

### **Risk Management: Do's and Don'ts of Clinical Practice Guidelines**

This article (<http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/education/DosandDontsofClinicalmanagement97.pdf>) was published in the ACNM newsletter, *Quickening*, in May/June 1997.

### **State Laws and Regulations**

State Practice acts and regulations governing nurse-midwifery practice sometimes require written practice guidelines (which may be referred to as protocols). For detailed information regarding individual state laws and regulations, refer to *Summaries of State Laws and Regulations Affecting CNMs/CMs (members only)*.  
<http://www.midwife.org/today.cfm>

### **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)**

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality maintains a National Guideline Clearinghouse and publishes *Clinician's Handbook of Preventive Services: Putting Prevention into Practice*. Both are available on their Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov), or they may be reached at (301) 594-1364.

### **Home Birth Practices**

Midwives providing home birth services will find helpful information in the ACNM handbook, *Home Birth Practice*, which is available at: <http://acnm.stores.yahoo.net/hombirpracha.html>. Also useful is the paper cited below from the *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery (JNM)*.\*

### **American Association of Birth Centers (AABC) (formerly the National Association of Childbearing Centers (NACC))**

Midwives who practice in birth centers should be aware of the AABC publication, *Sample Birth Center Policies and Procedures Manual*. Based on the protocols of a licensed and nationally accredited birth center, the manual includes a loose leaf hard copy and computer diskette to enable individual centers to customize the manual. Contact NACC at <http://www.birthcenters.org/> or 866-542-4784.

### **Searching the Midwifery and Medical Literature**

When searching the midwifery and medical literature for the purpose of developing and updating clinical practice guidelines, the most helpful MeSH term to combine with a particular topic or diagnosis is “practice guidelines.” “Clinical protocols” is also useful, as is the qualifier, “standards.” Space does not permit an inclusive listing here, but the following are examples of the many papers that are helpful in developing clinical practice guidelines:

Lee L. Introducing herbal medicine into conventional health care settings. JNM 1999; 44:253-266.

Lichtman R. Perimenopausal and postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy. Part 2. Hormonal regimens and complementary and alternative therapies. JNM 1996; 41:195-210.

Morales ME, Maliszewski S, Greenlees M. In pursuit of excellence: quality assurance, documentation, and peer review by home birth CNMs. JNM 1995; 40:555-569.

\* In January 2000, JNM's name changed to the Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health (JMWH). JMWH is a peer-reviewed journal published bi-monthly by ACNM.

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The ACNM "QuickInfo" series was developed by the Department of Professional Practice & Health Policy to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Practice & Health Policy at (240) 485-1800 or [info@acnm.org](mailto:info@acnm.org).