

Primary Care Providers

“Nurse-midwifery philosophy is based on family-centered, community-based care with a focus on health promotion, counseling, education, and excellence through coordination of referrals; thus, nurse-midwives have a particular expertise in the fundamental aspects of primary care.”¹

Nurse-midwives have a long history of providing primary health care services, beginning with the early days of the Frontier Nursing Services, when they loaded saddlebags and traveled to remote areas to serve the families of Appalachia. Today, federal agencies such as the National Health Service Corps and the Office of Rural Health recognize certified nurse-midwives (CNMs®) as primary care providers (PCPs) and state Medicaid agencies have the option of utilizing CNMs as primary care case managers. The following resources will be helpful to those looking to understand and document the role of CNMs and Certified Midwives (CMs®) as PCPs.

The Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice

This document delineates the fundamental knowledge, skills, and behaviors expected of a new practitioner. The components of midwifery care outlined in the Core Competencies include the primary health care of women, specifying management of common health problems, as well as health promotion and disease prevention.

The Core Competencies are available on the ACNM web site at http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Core_Competencies_6_07.pdf. An editorial that accompanied publication of the third major revision of the Core Competencies in 1997 is also of interest.²

The Standards for the Practice of Midwifery

The Standards were revised in 2003 and include primary health care of women:

STANDARD V

MIDWIFERY CARE IS BASED UPON KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND JUDGMENTS WHICH GUIDE THE SCOPE OF CARE AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO CLIENTS

The midwife:

1. Maintains written documentation of the parameters of service for independent and collaborative midwifery management and transfer of care when needed.
2. Has accessible resources to provide evidence based clinical practice for each specialty area which may include, but is not limited to, primary health care of women, care of the childbearing family, and newborn care.

The Standards are available at

http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/descriptive/Standards_for_Practice_of_Midwifery_12_09.pdf.

Position Statement: Certified Nurse-midwives and Certified Midwives as Primary Care Providers/Case Managers (Approved 1992, Revised 1997; 2005)

This statement, available on the ACNM web site at

http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/CNMs_&_CMs_as_PCP_05.pdf, describes the essential factors of primary care and case management inherent in midwifery care.

“CNMs and CMs are often the initial contact for providing health care to women, and they provide such care on a continuous and comprehensive basis by establishing a plan of management with the woman for her ongoing health care.”

Journal of Nurse-Midwifery (JNM)* Home Study Program (HSP)

Although CE credits are no longer available, a three-part HSP published by JNM on primary care for women still provides useful information.

Part 1: Comprehensive Health Assessment was published in the JNM, Vol. 40, No. 2, March/April 1995.

Part 2: Management of Common Health Problems was published in the JNM, Vol. 41, No. 2, March/April 1996.

Part 3: A Public Health Perspective was published in the JNM, Vol. 42, No. 6, November/December 1997.

The series begins with an overview of the role of the midwives in primary care, includes management strategies for common problems from mental health to musculoskeletal problems, and concludes with articles stressing a population-based approach to primary health care for women.

Legal Guidelines

Some states have laws and regulations that define the scope of midwifery practice and may have an impact on how midwives deliver primary care services. Such laws and regulations, when they exist, are addressed in the Overview of State Laws and Regulations Affecting CNM/CM Practice, which is available to members only on the ACNM Web site at http://www.midwife.org/state_legislation.cfm. Some state laws explicitly reference ACNM documents, thereby clearly incorporating primary care in the midwife’s scope of practice.

References

1. Paine LL, Barger MK, Marchese T, Rorie J. Primary care for women: An overview of the role of the nurse-midwife. *J Nurse Midwifery* 1995; 40:65-73.
2. Roberts J, Sedler KD. The Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice: critical ACNM document revised. *J Nurse Midwifery* 1997; 42:371-372.

*Beginning in January 2000, the journal was renamed, *Journal of Midwifery & Women’s Health (JMWH)*.

** The ACNM Resource Catalog is available from the ACNM Web site, www.midwife.org. You may also contact us at the phone number or e-mail address below and request that a Catalog be mailed to you.

The ACNM “QuickInfo” series was developed by the Department of Professional Practice & Health Policy to respond to common inquiries by summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact our department at (240) 485-1844 or pphp@acnm.org. (Listing of other services and products does not imply endorsement by ACNM.)

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