



POSITION STATEMENT

MIDWIFERY EDUCATION AND THE DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP)

It is the position of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) that among the variety of educational pathways, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) may be one option for some nurse-midwifery programs, but should not be a requirement for entry into midwifery practice.

ACNM holds fast to competency-based education as the core of midwifery education, and also recognizes the value of graduate degree preparation in midwifery, nursing, public health and other related fields. Nurse-midwives are prepared to serve women and childbearing families, as well as provide leadership and political action in order to improve health care locally, nationally and globally. Much of the midwifery workforce is already prepared at the graduate level and education programs have evolved to include many options for advanced degrees, including the master of science in nursing, the master of science in midwifery, master of public health, a range of doctoral preparation (PhD, DNS, DrPH, EdD, JD), and most recently the DNP. ACNM values all of those options for graduate education and recognizes that competency-based education for midwifery may be included in a variety of degree options.

There is inadequate evidence to support the DNP as the entry-level requirement for midwifery education. While it is true that additional time spent in an educational environment would likely benefit graduates, no data are available addressing the need for additional education to practice safely as a midwife. Indeed, there are decades of evidence that graduates from Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) (formerly ACNM Division of Accreditation (DOA)) accredited midwifery education programs, regardless of terminal degree, are safe, cost-effective care providers of maternity and women's health care.

Data are lacking regarding the potential impact of the DNP on the applicant pool and on the cost to the health care system. However, it is clear that the requirement of an additional degree will result in a substantive increase in expense and time to the students and the educational institutions. In a time of critical shortage of midwives and other women's health care providers, the requirement of an additional degree decreases their availability in the workforce.

ACNM has set the standard for education programs for certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) since 1962 and certified midwives (CMs) since 1997. The clinical safety of entry-level midwifery practice has been and will continue to be assured by several mechanisms.

- Entry-level competencies that must be mastered in all education programs are standardized in the ACNM document "Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice," which is updated periodically.

- The Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) assesses the quality and content of midwifery education programs. ACME has more than 40 years of expertise in setting standards of accreditation and has been continuously recognized as an accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education since 1982. ACME currently accredits independent institutions as well as nurse-midwifery and midwifery programs affiliated with institutions of higher learning. DOA accredits programs in institutions that offer distance education options.
- The American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) is responsible for developing and administering the national certification examination. AMCB is a member of the National Organization for Certifying Agencies (NOCA) and is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

Because the educational standards for midwifery education, accreditation and certification have been and continue to be carefully updated, monitored and maintained, the practice of nurse-midwives has well-documented evidence regarding its safety and positive outcomes for women and newborns. ACNM does **not** support the requirement of the DNP for entry into clinical midwifery practice.

Source:

DNP Task Force made up of members from:

- Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education
- American College of Nurse-Midwives Division of Education
- American Midwifery Certification Board
- Directors of Midwifery Education

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