



POSITION STATEMENT

Midwifery/Nurse-Midwifery Education and Certification in the United States

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional organization that sets national educational and practice standards for certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs). Standards for education and certification in midwifery are identical for CNMs and CMs, and the difference between the two credentials reflects the background of the individual prior to entering professional midwifery. Both enter the profession with degrees in a variety of fields and complete course work in the sciences and social sciences, but CNMs enter midwifery as registered nurses (RNs). This document provides a brief overview of the education, credentials, and certification processes for CMs and CNMs. ACNM has released separate position statements regarding education requirements, licensing, and regulation for midwives who are not CNMs or CMs.^{1,2}

Core Competencies

Entry-level competencies that must be mastered in all education programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) are standardized in the ACNM Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice.³ This document was developed by ACNM, is reviewed every 5 years, and is revised as needed. Curricular standards for programs have been set by ACNM since 1962.⁴⁻⁶

Midwifery Education Programs

All midwifery education programs associated with the certification of CNMs and CMs are located in or affiliated with institutions of higher learning that are accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Midwifery graduate programs accredited by the ACME grant master's degrees or higher or are affiliated with schools that offer graduate degree completion options. ACME is an autonomous accrediting agency and has been recognized continuously by the U.S. Department of Education since 1982. Standardized criteria developed by ACME are used to assess the quality and content of midwifery education.⁷ A complete list of currently accredited programs and institutions is provided on the ACNM website.⁸

Certification Process for CNMs and CMs

The American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) is an autonomous certifying organization accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. The functions of the AMCB include initial certification of CNMs/CMs for entry to clinical practice, recertification, and discipline. Candidates must graduate from an ACME-accredited program to be eligible to sit for the national certification examination administered by the AMCB. Individuals who successfully complete AMCB certification requirements are granted certificates as CNMs or CMs. Certification is maintained through a certificate maintenance program that requires continuing education and successful completion of learning modules. CMs and CNMs are educated to meet the same high standards that every state in the United States has recognized as the legal basis for nurse-midwifery practice. All education programs for CNMs

and CMs are at the post-baccalaureate level and confer graduate degrees upon completion.

Global Standards for Midwifery Education

The International Confederation of Midwives has defined a midwife as a person who, “having been regularly admitted to a midwifery education program duly recognized in the country in which it is located, has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery and acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery.”⁹ The education standards for CNMs and CMs exceed the minimum educational requirements set forth by the ICM.¹⁰

The Legal Status of Midwifery

CNMs can be licensed to practice in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. However, the specifics of licensure and regulations related to midwifery practice and prescriptive authority vary widely among the states. CMs can be licensed as such in five states: New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maine and Delaware. As an organization, ACNM supports efforts to legally recognize CMs as qualified midwifery practitioners granted the same rights and responsibilities as CNMs.

Standards of Practice

The ACNM Standards for the Practice of Midwifery require that the CNM/CM demonstrates a safe mechanism for obtaining medical consultation, collaboration and referral; participates in a program of quality management and peer review; practices in accordance with the legal and disciplinary requirements of the jurisdiction where the practice occurs; and shows evidence of continuing educational competency.¹¹ The Standards for the Practice of Midwifery are reviewed regularly and revised as needed to ensure that they are supported by the most current evidence base.

REFERENCES

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 11. Standards for the practice of midwifery. http://www.midwife.org/ACNM/files/ACNMLibraryData/UPLOADFILENAME/000000000051/Standards_for_Practice_of_Midwifery_Sept_2011.pdf. Revised and approved September 24, 2011. Accessed February 8, 2016.

This combined position statement replaces the Midwifery Education position statement revised June 2010 and the Midwifery Certification in the United States position statement approved March 2009. Approved by the Board of Directors – March 2016

Note. Midwifery as used throughout this document refers to the education and practice of certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB, formerly ACNM Certification Council, Inc.).