



# POSITION STATEMENT

## Midwives' Performance of Ultrasound in Clinical Practice

The American College of Nurse-Midwives maintains the following:

It is within the scope of midwifery practice for midwives to perform ultrasound examinations.

Performance of ultrasound examinations can be incorporated into midwifery practice by following the *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*, which delineates the requirements for expanding midwifery skills beyond those outlined in the ACNM's *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Education*.<sup>1,2</sup>

Midwives who wish to incorporate ultrasound examinations into their scope of clinical practice should have appropriate education and training, acquire the necessary skills, and demonstrate the specific competencies to master the studies they perform.

Education and training for ultrasound can be incorporated into certified nurse-midwife/certified midwife (CNM/CM) education programs as an added skill beyond those required in the *Core Competencies*, or the necessary education for performance of ultrasound can be obtained on a continuing education basis following a structured curriculum.

Midwives who perform ultrasound examinations following appropriate education and training should be eligible for reimbursement for these services.

State regulations and licensing related to midwifery scope of practice should provide for CNMs/CMs to perform ultrasound, interpret and implement management commensurate with their education and training.

### Background

In 1996, ACNM published the first clinical bulletin providing guidelines for midwives who wanted to incorporate third trimester ultrasound examinations into their clinical practice.<sup>3</sup> Since then, clinical practice has changed, and many midwives are now performing ultrasound examinations during all trimesters of pregnancy and including gynecologic ultrasound in their clinical practice.<sup>4</sup> Expanded guidelines for the performance of all types of obstetric ultrasound have been published and updates maintained by three professional organizations: The American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM), the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nursing (AWHONN).<sup>4,5,6</sup> AIUM is a multidisciplinary association that provides education, research, and the development of professional guidelines for performance of ultrasound across professional disciplines. ACNM has collaborated with these various organizations and their committees in the development of guidelines and scope of practice documents which outline use

of ultrasound in women's health and maternity care practice. All three organizations offer expert, evidence-based guidelines for skill development and didactic education necessary for competent performance of ultrasound.

ACNM encourages an educational component that includes the following:

- physics and instrumentation relevant to the exam being performed,
- required elements and components as described by AWHONN, ACOG or AIUM for the type of exam to be performed,
- the required anatomic landmarks as described by ACOG or AIUM pertinent to the type of exam to be performed,
- indications for type(s) of exam(s) being performed,
- clinical implications of normal and abnormal findings,
- ultrasound safety,
- components of a complete ultrasound report,
- patient education and
- process of informed consent regarding the scope and limitations of varied ultrasounds performed

With appropriate additional training as outlined by ACNM, AIUM, ACOG or AWHONN, midwives may perform ultrasound examinations within the scope of midwifery practice. Obstetric ultrasound examination may be performed in all trimesters of pregnancy to obtain specific information: determining gestational age, assessing fetal well-being and measuring maternal cervical length. Ultrasound may also be performed at a point-of-care to gain specific information pertinent to assessment of the woman or her fetus.<sup>7,8</sup> It is not necessary for midwives to achieve competency in all types of ultrasound, they may tailor their education and training to the specific type of ultrasound examination(s) they wish to perform.

When incorporating ultrasound into clinical practice, appropriate training, credentialing, consultation, collaboration, and referral for abnormal findings must be established in accordance with state law and included in midwifery practice guidelines. Beyond the specific skills and knowledge for performing ultrasound in clinical practice, midwives should be versed in the process of informed consent to describe the limitations, benefits and risks of performing varied types of ultrasound to their clients, including what information is gained or not gained in the process of a point of care ultrasound.<sup>7</sup>

Midwives who wish to perform technically advanced ultrasound evaluations, such as fetal anatomic surveys, may wish to seek credentialing through the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS). Depending on individual state laws it can be within the scope of practice for CNMs/CMs to interpret and report findings, initiate clinical management based on exam findings and bill for insurance reimbursement.

## REFERENCES

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7. American Institute of Ultrasound, Definition of Point of Care, published Nov. 2011 <http://www.aium.org/publications/soundWavesWeekly/article.aspx?aId=89&iId=20100916>. Accessed May 10, 2012.
8. Point of Care Ultrasound Imaging. Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography. <http://www.sdms.org/positions/pointofcare.asp>. Accessed May 30, 2012.

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