

# Nurse-Midwifery's Rural Roots

## Establishment of nurse-midwifery in the US



Mary Breckinridge, a pioneering nurse who founded the Frontier Nursing Service (FNS) in eastern Kentucky, was the first to bring nurse-midwifery to the United States. Breckinridge established the FNS in the early 1920s to provide family health services to isolated areas in the Appalachian Mountains by sending public health nurses to their patients on horseback. After learning about nurse-midwives in Europe, she saw first-hand their contributions to maternity care by traveling to France and England. In 1929, the British nurse-midwives she brought to FNS became the first nurse-midwives in the US. They joined the public health nurses in providing quality healthcare to patients in remote areas.

## Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs)/Certified Midwives (CMs) and Rural Health

Midwifery has grown steadily in the U.S. since the days of Mary Breckenridge, with particularly marked growth in the past decade. Since 1990, the number of nurse-midwife-attended births in the United States has doubled. This growth has been supported by published research, which demonstrates that Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs) (when compared with obstetrician/gynecologists) provide high-quality care with comparable or better outcomes, high levels of patient satisfaction and at lower costs due to fewer unnecessary, invasive, and expensive technologic interventions. For more information, please take a look at *Nurse-Midwifery in 2006: A Summary of Research on Nurse-Midwifery Practice in the United States*, available on the ACNM Web site at [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org).

Today, CNMs and Certified Midwives (CMs) provide health care to women in rural areas from the islands off the coast of Alaska to the Florida Keys, from upstate New York, to the Rio Grande Valley. Physicians, hospital administrators and women have found that CNMs, as licensed independent health professionals capable of providing primary care to women, offer a cost-effective, patient friendly solution to the challenge of providing women's health care, especially maternity services, to rural women. This booklet answers FAQs about midwifery care and provides brief descriptions of several rural midwifery practices. If you have questions about encouraging access to midwifery care in your area, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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# Nurse-Midwives and Rural Health Care

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **How are nurse-midwives licensed?**

Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) are licensed to practice in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This has been the case for many years.

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### **What can CNMs do?**

CNMs provide a number of women's health care services that compliment medical practice. CNMs are primary care providers educated to perform a comprehensive women's health assessment, screen for and treat common health problems, and prescribe medications, including contraception. They provide prenatal care. Some CNMs see only normal, healthy women, while others provide maternity care in high risk clinics where medical conditions are managed collaboratively with physicians. Certified nurse-midwives' scope of practice includes admission history and physical exams, management of uncomplicated labors, attending normal spontaneous vaginal deliveries, cutting and repairing episiotomies, and providing postpartum care. With specialized training, some CNMs do advanced procedures such as first assist at cesarean section.

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### **Can CNMs get hospital privileges?**

Yes. 98 percent of the births attended by nurse-midwives are hospital births. In hospitals throughout the country, nurse-midwives have clinical privileges and are credentialed by the medical staff. The Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO) standards allow the medical staff to credential CNMs. For more information about credentialing, visit [www.ShopACNM.com](http://www.ShopACNM.com) to purchase the *Clinical Privileges & Credentialing Handbook* (ACNM, 2005).

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### **Can certified nurse-midwives bill insurance, Medicaid and Medicare?**

Yes. Both the Medicaid and Medicare laws permit reimbursement to certified nurse-midwives. The majority of insurance programs allow reimbursement to CNMs as either a primary or point of service provider. Billing can be for prenatal care, labor and delivery, family planning, and women's health services, among others. For more information about billing for CNMs services, visit [www.ShopACNM.com](http://www.ShopACNM.com) to purchase *Billing, Coding and Payment for Nurse-Midwifery Services* (ACNM, 2003).

#### **How can I bill for labor and delivery?**

- For questions about billing for labor and delivery, contact Martha Carter, CNM, Executive Director of FamilyCare Health Center in West Virginia. Office: 304-757-6999, e-mail: [Martha.cookcarter@familycarewv.org](mailto:Martha.cookcarter@familycarewv.org), and on the Web at [www.familycarewv.org](http://www.familycarewv.org).

## **How are certified nurse-midwives educated?**

To earn the credential CNM, one must graduate from a nationally accredited nurse-midwifery education program affiliated with an institution of higher education. There are 43 accredited programs in the US in such prestigious universities as Yale, Columbia, Georgetown University, Vanderbilt and the University of Michigan. Graduates of an accredited program must pass a national certification exam. Most CNMs have a master's degree or higher. Many have worked for a number of years as a nurse; some hold degrees in public health; and some are also physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

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## **How do nurse-midwives' schedules work?**

For information about scheduling for on-call hours and office visits, contact Martha Carter, CNM, Executive Director of FamilyCare Health Center in West Virginia. Office: 304-757-6999, e-mail [Martha.cookcarter@familycarewv.org](mailto:Martha.cookcarter@familycarewv.org), and on the Web at [www.familycarewv.org](http://www.familycarewv.org).

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## **How can I find out more?**

The American College of Nurse-Midwives, the professional organization for CNMs and CMs, sets the national standards for the education, certification and practice of certified nurse-midwives. ACNM has a variety of resources designed to assure successful practice. From handbooks on billing and coding to the latest data on state laws affecting practice, we serve as the individual consultation with nurse-midwives. The ACNM Web site, [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org), is a great place to look for information

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## **How can I find a midwife?**

[www.MidwifeJobs.com](http://www.MidwifeJobs.com) is the perfect place to find a nurse-midwife to work in your rural health center.

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## **What professional support systems are available to CNMs in rural areas?**

In the NRHA Issue Paper, *Recruitment and Retention of a Quality Health Workforce in Rural Areas, Number 6*, rural health facilities were encouraged to develop professional support systems for advanced practice nurses to address concerns associated with professional isolation. ACNM has set up an emidwife discussion group for rural midwives to provide such a support system. We encourage all rural midwives to go to [www.midwife.org/memberservices](http://www.midwife.org/memberservices) and join the discussion!

## Rural Midwifery Practices

Midwifery has strong historical roots in some of the most rural states in the nation, and midwives have cared for women in geographically rural areas for many years. As women in rural America face increasing challenges in our current health care system, nurse-midwives continue to find innovative ways to meet their needs. In some of the most rural states in the nation -- Vermont, New Mexico, and Maine -- midwives are attending a substantial portion of births. As maternity care faces increased challenges with access to care, it is clear that midwifery possesses both the historical background and philosophy of care to meet the needs of our nation's most rural citizens.

My own clinical experience serves as an example of this. For the last seventeen years I have been practicing midwifery in rural New York and Pennsylvania. For years I was the only prenatal care provider in the county with my office located in a double-wide trailer 60 miles from the closest hospital. As midwives, we provide not only prenatal care, but also well women care and preventive health care to a population sometimes desperately in need of care. As women, we understand the need to provide that care for families and communities.

I am completing doctoral education in Rural Health at Binghamton University in central New York. I am learning about the concepts and philosophy of rural health and looking forward to blending my years of clinical expertise with doctoral studies to better meet the needs of rural women and families. Midwifery needs to be quantified and recognized within the realm of rural health so we can assist in the improvement of health care of that segment of our nation. I am excited to be part of this process. Below, you will find descriptions from midwives working with rural populations across the U.S.

Nicole Rouhana, CNM, FNP-C, MSN  
Doctoral Student  
Binghamton University  
Decker School of Nursing  
Rural Health  
Binghamton, NY

## **Barrington Ob Gyn**

Barrington Ob Gyn is a hospital-based practice that began as a Department of Health-funded prenatal clinic in 1988. The impetus for the practice was the area's high perinatal mortality rate. Uninsured rural women had little access to prenatal care due to lack of insurance and lack of transportation to sources of care. Barrington's presence with outreach and midwifery care resulted in a significantly improved perinatal mortality rate as well as a reduced preterm delivery rate and improvements in "adequacy of care" for local residents.

Contact: Linda Baxter CNM, MS  
780 Main St, Great Barrington, MA 01230  
(413) 528-1470

## **Birth Care and Family Health Services**

Birth Care and Family Health Services is a community-owned, non-profit birth center, also offering home and hospital births, serving all of Lancaster County, Chester County and eastern York County, Pennsylvania. They offer:

- Full scope women's health care, including pregnancy, birth, postpartum, GYN, Family Planning, etc.
- Well baby care through 28 weeks of life
- Family health and primary care provided on site (and in homes) by non employee FNP.

Contact: Maren Ketcham  
1138 Georgetown Road, Quarryville PA  
4042-A Ridge Road, Gordonville PA  
Mailing address: PO Box 152 Bart PA 17503  
(717) 786-4010  
[birthcare@birthcaremidwives.com](mailto:birthcare@birthcaremidwives.com)  
[www.birthcaremidwives.com](http://www.birthcaremidwives.com)

## **Mary McLane Home Birth Service**

Mary McLane, CNM has a private home birth practice in York, Dauphin, Cumberland, Lebanon and Lancaster Counties, Pennsylvania. She has been providing prenatal, labor and birth, postpartum, newborn and well-women care for 10 years. Some of her clients are in rural areas, some in urban. She conducts home visits for her patients and attends 2-7 births per month.

Contact: Mary McLane, CNM  
206 Manor Ave., Millersville, PA 17551  
(717) 413-6742  
Fax (717) 872-4284  
[puffey@verizon.net](mailto:puffey@verizon.net)

## **Obstetricians and Gynecologists**

Obstetricians and Gynecologists is a practice with two CNMs and three MDs. They practice full-scope midwifery in central Nebraska and attend births at a local hospital.

Contact: Barbara Peckham, CNM  
2115 N Kansas, Hastings, NE 68901  
(402) 463-6793

## **OB/GYN Center**

The OB/GYN Center in Canton, New York offers full-scope nurse-midwifery by Laurie Mousaw, CNM at the EJ Noble Building, which is part of the Primary Care Centers at Canton-Potsdam Hospital. Births are attended at Canton-Potsdam Hospital. The practice offers:

- Full scope women's health care, preconception, pregnancy, birth, postpartum, GYN, and health maintenance
- Collaboration with OB/GYN physician.

Contact: Laurie Mousaw  
315-261-5505

## **Nurse-Midwifery Service at Bassett Health Care**

Bassett Healthcare is a rural collaborative practice of full-scope midwifery that has been serving women in rural New York since 1986. There are nine CNMs on staff, working for Bassett Healthcare, which is a multispecialty group practice with the entire medical staff employed by the hospital. They attend births at an in-hospital birth center and provide prenatal and well-woman care at eight community health centers. The eight locations decrease the travel time for the patients and their families. Bassett has been a Prenatal Care Assistance Program site since 1990 and has decreased the no-show and late entry to care since the establishment of the community health centers and the growth of the midwifery service.

Bassett Healthcare is part of the catchment area for Albany Medical Center, the tertiary center. They have been noted by their annual process of QA to have either the first or second (it vacillates) highest breastfeeding initiation (74%) and continuation rates in the cohort. They also have the lowest cesarean rate and the highest VBAC rates in the cohort.

Contact: M. Patricia Brown, CNM  
1 Atwell Road, Cooperstown, New York 13326  
(607) 547-4593  
*patricia.brown@bassett.org*  
*www.bassetthealthcare.org*

## **KinniSide Women's Health Center**

KinniSide Women's Health Center is a midwife-owned, full-scope midwifery practice with collaboration with ob-gyn. They attend hospital births at Hudson Hospital and Woodwinds Hospital in rural Wisconsin. They offer:

- Full scope women's health care, including pregnancy, birth, postpartum, GYN, Family Planning, menopausal counseling, etc.
- Breastfeeding counseling, breast pump rentals and supplies
- Massage therapist and Doula in house
- Lactation Counselor in house

Contact: Stephanie Johnson, CNM  
1343 North Main Street  
River Falls, WI 54022  
(715) 426-0200  
Fax: (715) 426-6393  
*stephanie@kinniside.com*  
*www.kinniside.com*

## Home BirthWorks

Home BirthWorks is a midwife-owned, full-scope, home birth practice serving North Kent County and all of Newaygo, Lake, Oceana, Montcalm, and Muskegon counties. They offer:

- Full scope midwifery care including pregnancy, birth, postpartum and gynecology care.
- Well baby care through the first 28 days of life
- Breastfeeding counseling
- Doula services

Contact: Susan M. Wentz, CNM, DrPH  
5505 Centerline Road  
Newaygo, Michigan 49337  
(231) 652 3247

## Women's Wellness and Maternity Center

Women's Wellness and Maternity Center is a freestanding birth center with birth available in a Level I hospital as well. They provide a well child clinic, gyn and women's health care, and bilingual providers (Spanish). Women's Wellness is a Rural Health Clinic, and has been designated a Rural Frontier Women's Health Coordinating Center by the Office on Women's Health of HRSA.

Contact: Jill Alliman, CNM, Director  
PO Box 115  
Madisonville, TN 37354  
(423) 442-6624  
Fax (423) 442-5746  
[www.wellnessandmaternity.net](http://www.wellnessandmaternity.net)

## Natchez Trace Maternity Center

Natchez Trace Maternity Center is a freestanding birth center that provides prenatal care, birth center and hospital births, care for newborns through the first two weeks, and well-woman gynecological care including birth control and menopause care.

Contact: Elaine Wakeland, CNM  
720 Hwy. 99, P.O. Box 974, Waynesboro, TN 38485  
(931)722-2229, (877) 270-2229  
<http://natcheztracematernitycenter.org/>



## Lebanon Valley Midwifery and Women's Wellness

Lebanon Valley Midwifery and Women's Wellness is a sole-proprietorship serving Lebanon, western Berks and nearby counties in Pennsylvania. They offer:

- Full scope women's health care: preconception, infertility, pregnancy, birth, postpartum, GYN, family planning, preventative health maintenance and incidental primary care
- Well-baby care through 28 days of life
- Care provided on site (and in homes); birth setting: home **and hospital** birth
- Collaboration: OB-GYN and pediatrician

Contact: Susan Farrell, CNM  
770 Host Road, Womelsdorf, PA 19567  
(717) 933-9743  
Fax: (717) 933-8289  
[lvmww@nbn.net](mailto:lvmww@nbn.net)

## Alegent Health Clinics and Hospital

Alegent Health Clinics and Hospital is a full scope midwifery practice as well as newborn care and total care across the life span. They work in collaboration with family practice physicians, general surgeons, ob-gyns, and perinatologists. They attend hospital births in a home-like atmosphere at Alegent Health Mercy Hospital in Corning, Iowa. They offer:

- Full scope women's healthcare including preconception, prenatal, birth, postpartum, gynecological, menopausal counseling, contraception counseling
- Newborn care, including circumcisions
- Lactation Educator on staff
- Births attended by the midwife who has done all the prenatal care during the pregnancy

Contact: Jill Breach CNM, FNP  
703 Rosary Drive, Corning, Iowa 50841  
(641) 322-5245 (Corning, IA), (641) 333-2266 (Lenox, IA)  
Fax: (641) 322-4687 (Corning, IA), (641) 333-2231 (Lenox, IA)  
[JBreach@alegent.org](mailto:JBreach@alegent.org)

## Ladysmith Medical Center

Certified Nurse-Midwifery service in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Full Scope Nurse-Midwifery offered by Edi Weiss-Holzbauer, CNM at the Ladysmith Medical Center, which is part of the Marshfield Clinic system. Births will be attended at the Rusk County Hospital which is adjacent to the clinic. Family Practice physicians will provide collaboration and backup.

Contact: Edi Weiss-Holzbauer, CNM  
(715) 532-2300

## **Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center - Nurse-Midwifery Practice**

The Nurse Midwifery Service at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center began in 1983 and was recognized nationally in 2005 for its excellence and longevity by the American College of Nurse-Midwives. There are nine midwives in this group practice. The midwives provide care in three locations helping our rural communities access our services without having to travel far from home. We cover our service 24 hours a day, providing full scope women's health care including preconception, prenatal, birth, postpartum, gynecological, menopausal counseling, contraception counseling. Our births take place at the Birth Pavilion at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. We enjoy a collaborative relationship with a team that includes board certified maternal fetal medicine specialists, obstetrician/gynecologist, reproductive endocrinologist and genetic counselors. Our rural tertiary care center has on-staff lactation consultants, 24 hour anesthesia coverage and an intensive care unit.

Contact: Katrina A. Thorstensen, CNM, MSN  
One Medical Center Drive, Lebanon, NH 03756  
(603) 653-9310  
[www.dhmc.org](http://www.dhmc.org)

### **Care for Her**

Care for Her is a women's health center operated by Mendocino Community Clinic, Inc. (MCHC). Care for Her provides lifelong healthcare services to women. Staff includes Dr. Tanya Kalmar, MD, OB/GYN, three Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) and a Women's Health Nurse-Practitioner. Services include midwifery-based obstetrical care, family planning services, complete gynecological care, a Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program (CPSP) and birth control services to insured and the uninsured women in our region. To best serve our patient population, the practice is fluently bilingual in Spanish.

MCHC's midwives have privileges at Ukiah Valley Medical Center's obstetrical unit (level II nursery services). Care for Her staff has the expertise to follow up on abnormal PAP results, etc. Patients with other health conditions are referred to practitioners within MCHC or other affiliated specialists.

Mendocino Community Clinic, Inc. is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that operates three community-based health centers serving California's Lake and Mendocino Counties. MCHC's health centers provide medical, dental and behavioral health services, pharmacy, lab services, specialty care, addiction services and chronic disease case management.

Contact: Vivian Kay White, CNM  
333 Laws Ave, Ukiah, CA  
(707) 468-1010  
[vwhite@mchcinc.org](mailto:vwhite@mchcinc.org)  
<http://mchcinc.org/>

## Holy Family Birth Center

Four nuns, including Angela Murdaugh, a certified nurse-midwife and a Franciscan Sister of Mary, founded Holy Family Birth Center in 1983. Sister Angela is the only one of the original four still practicing midwifery at Holy Family. The center, located in Weslaco, a town of about 28,000 that sits between Harlingen and McAllen on Texas Highway 83, is funded by private grants and donations. It comprises of 15 small buildings that sit on four acres. Three duplexes serve as the birthing suites. The staff members come from all over the country – Oregon, Colorado, Wisconsin, and New York – to work under Sister Angela, a legendary figure in midwife circles.

Contact: Sister Angela Murdaugh, CNM  
North FM 88 and Mile 11  
5819 North FM 88  
Weslaco, Texas 78596 USA  
(956) 969-2538  
Fax (956) 969-5884  
[www.holyfamilybirthcenter.com](http://www.holyfamilybirthcenter.com)

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