Direct Access to Obstetrical and Gynecologic Professionals – Health Care Reform Law (111-148)

Background: Many states already ensure direct access to obstetric and gynecologic care professionals, including midwives. As health care coverage is expanded under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the right of women to receive direct access is now federally protected.

ACNM Position/Policy: ACNM is a strong supporter of direct access to providers of women’s health care services and the additional protection ensured by these provisions.

Summary of Provisions

Section 10101 of the health care reform bill establishes numerous patient protections relating to health insurance coverage. Of particular significance to midwives is Section 2719A (d), in which it is stated that group health plans or health insurance issuers offering group or individual health insurance coverage, are required to permit female enrollees to obtain obstetrical or gynecological care without first having to seek authorization or referral by the plan or a primary care physician. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for implementation and enforcement of these provisions.

Timeline for Implementation: January 1, 2014

Impact on Nurse Midwives: Ensuring that women have direct access to obstetric and gynecologic professionals, including midwives, is in keeping with existing law in states where direct access is not already mandated and is a positive step for women’s health. These provisions will ensure federal protection of state laws.

References: