



POSITION STATEMENT

Planned Home Birth

The number of families in the United States choosing to stay home to give birth has increased significantly in the past decade.^{1,2} For the essentially well woman experiencing a healthy pregnancy, intrapartum, postpartum, and newborn course, childbirth with qualified providers can be accomplished safely in all birth settings, including home, birth center, and hospital.³⁻¹² The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) affirms that:

- Every family has a right to give birth in an environment where human dignity, self-determination, and the family's cultural context are respected.
- Every woman has a right to shared decision-making regarding place of birth, and planned home birth should be accessible to healthy women who desire to give birth at home.
- Women who plan home births experience a course of care that facilitates normal, physiologic birth and reduces the need for obstetric and neonatal interventions.^{6-8,11,12}
- Certified midwives and certified nurse-midwives are qualified to provide antepartum, intrapartum, postpartum, and newborn care in the home.
- Home birth is best accomplished in an integrated, supportive system of safe, seamless care with respectful collaboration among all health care providers and institutions if a transfer of care from home to hospital becomes necessary.¹³⁻²⁰
- States and jurisdictions are responsible for creating a climate of respect for women's autonomy and authority through laws and regulations that support childbirth in home, birth center, and hospital settings.
- Reimbursement from third party payers should be available to licensed maternity care providers for comprehensive home birth services.
- Professional liability insurance carriers should provide coverage at actuarially appropriate premiums for licensed maternity care providers who attend home births.

Background

While more than 98% of women in the United States give birth in hospitals, some families prefer to give birth at home.^{1,21} The safety of birth in any setting is a primary concern and has

been the focus of home birth research.³⁻¹² Planned home birth refers to care by qualified providers of well women experiencing a healthy maternity cycle within a system that provides for hospitalization if necessary. Large observational studies have demonstrated excellent perinatal outcomes for planned home births.³⁻¹² Planned home birth is also credited with reduced use of medical interventions that are associated with perinatal morbidity for both women and their infants. The safety of home birth is optimized by assessing appropriateness of the woman and family for planned home birth, attendance by a qualified maternity care provider, and integrated systems that support collaborative care.¹³⁻²⁰

In the context of midwifery care, women are encouraged and supported to make informed choices regarding where they wish to give birth.²²⁻²⁵ The process of informed choice for the selection of birth site includes consideration of:

- Evidence-based delineation of potential risks and benefits of each available birth site,
- Assessment of maternal and fetal health,
- Access to qualified home birth attendants,
- Mechanism for transport of mother or newborn if need is indicated for personnel or equipment available only in the hospital setting

The home birth setting provides an unparalleled opportunity to study and learn from physiologic birth.^{26, 27} Insights into best practices for pregnancy and childbirth in all settings may be derived from further research of birth within the home.

For further guidance regarding evidence-based maternity care in the home setting, ACNM maintains several resources including the *Midwifery Provision of Home Birth Services ACNM Clinical Bulletin*¹³ and the Home Birth Practice Manual 3rd Edition.²⁸

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* 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 College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) or the American Midwifery Certification Board, Inc. (AMCB).

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