



POSITION STATEMENT

Midwifery Student Work Experience

In recognition that students who wish to enter midwifery education programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) bring varied strengths and talents to the profession, and that these experiences may not necessarily include labor and birth experience as a registered nurse, the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) affirms that

- The discipline of midwifery is separate from the discipline of nursing.
- Nursing experience in labor and birth is not a necessary prerequisite for midwifery education or successful working relationships with clinical preceptors.
- Nursing experience in labor and birth is not a requirement for students entering midwifery education programs accredited by ACME.
- Nursing experience in labor and birth is not required for newly graduated student midwives to sit for or pass the American Midwifery Certification Board national certification examination, nor is it considered required preparation for entry into basic midwifery practice.

Background

In the United States, the American Midwifery Certification Board certifies nurses and non-nurses with a midwifery credential as certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) or certified midwives (CMs) respectively. Both credentials confer the same scope of practice, and CNMs and CMs are equally respected for their contributions to maternal and infant health. ACNM endorses the CNM and CM credentials and by extension supports midwifery students enrolled in CNM and CM programs whether or not they have nursing experience in labor and birth. Through this endorsement, ACNM acknowledges that the discipline of midwifery is separate from the discipline of nursing. While both disciplines involve care for women in clinical settings, midwives and nurses may have different professional obligations, skills, and responsibilities for patient assessment.

Currently, more than half of the ACME-accredited midwifery education programs in the United States do not require students to have prior nursing experience in labor and birth (J. Lange Kessler, CM, DNP, written communication, October 13, 2016). Additionally, nearly half of all these programs admit students with bachelor's degrees in fields other than nursing.¹ Midwives who enter the profession with experience in disciplines other than nursing or in nursing fields other than labor and birth have varied talents and strengths that enrich the profession and women's health care as a whole.

Midwifery education programs accredited by ACME are designed to support midwifery as a stand-alone profession as globally acknowledged by the International Confederation of

Midwives and ACNM.^{2,3} Additionally, these midwifery education programs provide quality, state-of-the-art training in midwifery skills and clinical practice. All midwifery students are required to have current certifications in neonatal resuscitation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and electronic fetal monitoring before they provide clinical care. Classroom educators, clinical educators, preceptors, and midwifery employers will best address the current women's health care workforce needs and the needs of women in the United States by thoughtfully crafting education programs that meet the needs of all qualified students. ACNM acknowledges that well-constructed, multi-site research regarding the outcomes of midwifery students related to prior experience is needed.

REFERENCES

1. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Midwifery education programs. <http://acnm.org/Education-Programs-Directory>. Accessed April 6, 2017.
2. International Confederation of Midwives. Global standards for midwifery education. http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/ICM%20Standards%20Guidelines_ammended2013.pdf. Amended 2013. Accessed April 6, 2017.
3. Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education. The knowledge, skills, and behaviors prerequisite to midwifery clinical coursework. http://www.midwife.org/ACNM/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000000269/Knowledge-Skills-Behaviors_revised_Nov._2005.pdf. Revised November 2005. Accessed April 6, 2017.

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

Source: Division of Education

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