



POSITION STATEMENT

Midwives are Primary Care Providers and Leaders of Maternity Care Homes

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) affirms the following:

- Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) are providers of primary care for women and newborns.
- The use of CNMs and CMs as primary care providers is integral to the success of the healthcare workforce.
- CMs and CNMs must be recognized for their role in the provision of primary care services by state and federal programs aimed at increasing the primary care workforce.
- As primary care providers, CNMs and CMs are well positioned to lead patient-centered, medical, and maternity care teams.
- The designation “provider” or “clinician” must be used in place of “physician” in all regulatory and legislative language describing the concept of the patient-centered medical home.
- The terms “health care home” or “maternity care home” are preferable language to describe the concept of the patient-centered medical home

Background

Primary health care is the provision of integrated, accessible healthcare services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing the majority of healthcare needs, developing sustained partnerships with patients, and practicing within the context of family and community.¹

The health care home and maternity care home are models utilizing a centralized team of providers coordinated around the needs of the individual patient to improve access to ongoing safe, holistic, quality health care.

CNMs and CMs as Primary Care Providers

The Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice¹ describe the fundamental knowledge, skills, and behaviors expected of a new practitioner, including the provision of primary health care for women from the premenarcheal through the postmenopausal phase. The practitioner also provides primary care for newborns. CNMs and CMs are often the initial contact for women seeking health care and frequently provide services for rural and other underserved populations.² They provide such care on a continuous and comprehensive basis by establishing a plan of management with the woman that includes wellness, preventive care, screening, and treatment for healthcare problems. Furthermore, midwives provide care in the context of cultural, socioeconomic, and psychological factors that may influence the health status of the woman.

In March 2010, Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law. This law includes comprehensive health insurance reforms and a commitment by the federal government to increase the availability of primary care services. CNMs and CMs are integral members of the primary care workforce that can make these services more available.

CNMs are recognized as primary care providers under existing federal health care programs, including those that address primary care workforce expansion, reimbursement for services, and loan repayment programs.

- To address the nation's health care workforce demands, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) repays educational loans and provides scholarships to primary care health professionals who practice in areas of the country that have too few health care professionals to serve the people who live there. CNMs are eligible for placement as primary care providers in underserved areas of the United States through the NHSC. See US Code-Section 42 254I-1.
- CNM services are a mandatory benefit under the Medicaid program and states have the option of using CNMs as primary care case managers. CNMs are recognized to provide care within their full scope of practice under Medicare for women with disabilities of childbearing age and also primary care and well woman care for senior women. See US Code-Section 42 1396d(t)(2); US Code-Section 42 1396x(17); US Code- Section 42 1395x(gg).
- Federal law providing funding for nurse-midwifery educational programs states that these grants are to educate students "to be qualified to effectively provide primary health care, including primary health care in homes and in ambulatory care facilities, long-term care facilities, acute care, and other health care settings." See US Code-Section 42 296J.
- The Federal Employees Health Benefit Program states federal employees shall have direct access to the services of nurse-midwives. See US Code-Section 8 8902 (k).

History of the Health Care Home

In February 2007, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the American College of Physicians (ACP), and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) released the Joint Principles of a Patient-Centered Medical Home which were renamed Shared Principles in 2017.³ In the Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) model, the patient is the center of care and works in partnership with a primary care provider to optimize preventive health measures and care coordination. The patient is an active part of an interdisciplinary care team that acts to improve the quality of care, promote communication, and enhance efficient delivery of care.

The hallmarks of this care are reportable quality and safety measures that provide enhanced access to care and open communication with and among providers. The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) further defined the medical home and developed related quality standards and reporting measures.⁴ With continued growth, the PCMH model has expanded to more than 12,000 practices with more than 60,000 clinicians recognized by NCQA. Over 100 payers support the NCQA PCMH model with financial incentives or coaching.

Maternity Care Homes

The PCMH model has gained recognition as a quality improvement strategy, particularly for children, the elderly, and those with multiple co-morbidities. Recently, the PCMH model has become equally valued when applied to woman-centered care before, during, and after pregnancy. CNMs and CMs may provide care within this model for women during the childbearing years and across the lifespan. They may also function as primary care providers in a variety of settings, including Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

In 2012, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) launched the Strong Start Initiative, a funding challenge designed to reduce the frequency of premature births in pregnant Medicaid beneficiaries.⁴ The maternity care home, a comprehensive evidence-based prenatal care strategy option, is being evaluated as an intervention to enhance current care delivery, reduce disparities, and address the medical, behavioral, and psychosocial factors that may contribute to preterm-related poor birth outcomes. Maternity care homes will expand access to care, improve care coordination, and provide a broader array of health services.

REFERENCES

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4. National Committee for Quality Assurance. Patient-centered medical home. <http://www.ncqa.org/programs/recognition/practices/patient-centered-medical-home-pcmh/why-pcmh/overview-of-pcmh>. Published 2011, updated 2017. Accessed Feb 5, 2018.
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