

COMPETENCIES FOR MASTER'S EDUCATION IN MIDWIFERY

Introduction

The discipline of midwifery has a long and rich history. To continue this tradition, those practicing midwifery have an obligation to remain responsive to changing health care needs in an increasingly complex health care environment. To develop midwifery knowledge, skills, and competencies that improve patient health care and outcomes across the lifespan and in all settings, basic education for midwives represented by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) must be at the graduate level.

ACNM is the professional organization for midwives who are educated directly in midwifery (certified midwives [CMs]) or dually in nursing and midwifery (certified nurse-midwives [CNMs]). ACNM is responsible to the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) for ensuring that high-quality education programs are available to prepare midwives to practice in a way that is consistent with its published core competencies. ACNM defines midwifery practice as

the independent provision of care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period; sexual and reproductive health; gynecologic health; and family planning services, including preconception care. Midwives also provide primary care for individuals from adolescence through the lifespan as well as care of the normal newborn during the first 28 days of life. Midwives provide care for all individuals who seek midwifery care, inclusive of all gender identities and sexual orientations.¹

ACNM, ACME, and the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) all endorse a graduate-level degree as the basic preparation for midwifery practice for CNMs/CMs. All students must achieve the *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice*,² whether at the master's or doctoral level.

Definitions of Master's Degree and Competency

Because of the wide variety of master's degrees offered in various education programs for midwives, a set of competencies for this level of education provides a standard and scope to which such programs must adhere. These master's-level educational competencies relate to the theme of integrating clinical midwifery practice with midwifery education, administration, research, public service, or another related midwifery role. For students who enter a midwifery education program with a graduate-level degree, it remains the purview of the program faculty to determine whether this degree meets the master's-level competencies for a midwife.

This document was conceived using a definition of competency by the International Confederation of Midwives that has been incorporated into a competency framework.³ The

revision was informed by the work of Fullerton et al,⁴ which describes competency as a “complex *know-how* that is based on combining and mobilizing knowledge, skills, and abilities and external resources and then applying them appropriately to specific types of situations.”⁴ These competencies for Master’s education in midwifery may be used to guide educators who are developing, revising, or enhancing midwifery educational programs. The competencies will be available to ACME to inform the development of the criteria for accreditation of the master’s degree within midwifery programs. ACNM believes that such competencies should be flexible enough to reflect the variety of master’s degrees that midwives might earn, including, but not limited to, a Master of Science in Midwifery (MS), Master of Science in nursing or nurse-midwifery (MS), Master of Science in Nursing or Nurse-Midwifery (MSN), and Master of Public Health (MPH).

Master’s-Level Midwifery Competencies

After successfully completing a basic midwifery education program and earning a master’s degree from that program or having already received an appropriate graduate-level degree, the graduate will be able to integrate the provision of midwifery care with midwifery education, administration, research, public service, or other related midwifery roles. To achieve that outcome, the graduate will be able to do the following:

1. Evaluate and apply expert clinical knowledge into best practice models using relevant data to analyze midwifery outcomes.
2. Identify gaps between evidence and practice and consider potential solutions to bridge those gaps.
3. Evaluate and use research to provide high-quality, evidence-based health care, initiate change, and improve midwifery practice.
4. Analyze the process for health policy development, influential factors, and the effects of policy on clinical practice.
5. Participate in interprofessional education as an effective team member to enhance team function and promote positive change in health care.
6. Identify theories relevant to midwifery practice or scholarship, including theories to promote health equity, social justice, antiracism, and ethical policies in midwifery care.
7. Use information systems and other technologies to improve the quality and safety of health care.
8. Evaluate health care financing and identify the appropriate use of resources in the management of a health care practice.
9. Demonstrate the hallmarks of midwifery² in clinical practice, administration, and policy implementation, with particular attention to amelioration of health disparities.
10. Explore potential areas of interest in midwifery scholarship.

References

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https://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/acnmldata/uploadfilename/00000000050/ACNMCORECOMPETENCIESMAR2020_FINAL.PDF
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4. Fullerton JT, Thompson JB, Johnson P. Competency-based education: the essential basis of pre-service education for the professional midwifery workforce. *Midwifery*. 2013;29(10):1129-1136. doi:10.1016/j.midw.2013.07.006

Note. The terms *midwifery* and *midwives* as used throughout this document refer to the education and practice of certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB).

*Source: ACNM Master's Competency Task Force
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