

# POSITION STATEMENT

## Ultrasound in Midwifery Practice

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

- Performance of ultrasound examinations falls within expanded scope of practice for certified midwives (CMs) and certified nurse-midwives (CNMs).<sup>1,2</sup>
- Ultrasound examinations can be incorporated into a CM/CNM's clinical practice in accordance with ACNM's Standards for the Practice of Midwifery and position on the Expansion of Midwifery Practice and Skills Beyond Basic Core Competencies.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Midwives who incorporate ultrasound examinations into their clinical practice should have the knowledge and skills necessary to attain specific competencies and demonstrate comprehensive clinical competency.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Education and training for ultrasound in midwifery practice can be incorporated into accredited midwifery educational programs and/or continuing education.
- Midwives who complete sufficient ultrasound education should be eligible for insurance reimbursement for these services using their national provider identifier.
- State regulations and licensure related to midwifery scope of practice should not prohibit CNMs/CMs from performing ultrasound examinations, interpreting findings, and implementing management strategies commensurate with their education and training.

### Background

Ultrasound is a valuable assessment tool in perinatal, gynecologic, and reproductive health. Ultrasound has been used extensively in pregnancy for the past 20 years, and population-based studies have indicated that prudent use of ultrasound by trained health care providers is not associated with increased risk of harm to the fetus or pregnant person.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, to minimize risk of adverse effects such as cavitation, thermal effects, or infection, ultrasound should be used only when clinically indicated, and ultrasound providers should adhere to the principle of As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) and guidelines for proper cleaning and preparation of ultrasound transducers.<sup>5,7</sup>

When incorporating ultrasound into clinical practice, appropriate education, credentialing, consultation, collaboration, and referral for abnormal findings must be established in accordance with ACNM Standards of Practice.<sup>2</sup> ACNM has collaborated with leading professional organizations including the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN), American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM) to develop clinical practice, training guidelines, and position statements to define the role of ultrasound in midwifery practice and outline pathways to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to demonstrate

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clinical competence.<sup>5,8-9</sup> Based on these consensus evidence-based recommendations, educational programs for midwifery ultrasound should include the following components:

- Ultrasound safety, including the principle of As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) and guidelines for cleaning and preparation of ultrasound transducers<sup>7</sup>
- Physics and instrumentation
- Scope and limitations of midwifery ultrasound examination
- Elements of clinical ultrasound examination including:
  - Informed consent
  - Required anatomic landmarks and elements for the type of examination (as described by ACOG, AIUM, AWHONN)<sup>5,8-9</sup>
  - Indications for ultrasound examination
  - Clinical implications of findings
  - Patient education
  - Clinical documentation
- Documentation of technical competency

Although not required for practice, CMs/CNMs may elect to obtain certification through the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonography's Midwife Sonography Certificate developed in collaboration with ACNM.<sup>10,11</sup>

Midwifery scope of practice for ultrasound in perinatal health includes examination in all trimesters of pregnancy to obtain information related to gestational age, fetal wellbeing, cervical length, and biometry of the fetus or pregnant person. Ultrasound may also be performed at the point of care to gain specific information to guide clinical perinatal decision-making.<sup>12</sup> Midwifery ultrasound examination for gynecologic and reproductive health can include but is not limited to identification of reproductive anatomy and variations from normal, measurement of the endometrial stripe, location of an intrauterine device, identify the number and size of ovarian follicles, and assess embryologic or fetal development. It is not necessary for midwives to achieve competency in all types of ultrasound examinations; they may tailor education and training to the specific type(s) of examination they wish to perform.

Midwives who wish to perform technically advanced ultrasound evaluations such as nuchal translucencies and fetal anatomic surveys may seek expanded certification through the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers and the Fetal Medicine Foundation. CNMs/CMs may interpret and report findings based on such ultrasound examinations and be eligible for insurance reimbursement for these services.

## REFERENCES

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10. American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine. Training guidelines for physicians and advanced clinical providers performing point-of-care ultrasound examinations. August 12, 2019. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.aium.org/resources/training-guidelines/view/training-guidelines-for-physicians-and-advanced-clinical-providers-performing-point-of-care-ultrasound-examinations>

11. American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonography. Midwife sonography certificate. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.ardms.org/get-certified/midwifery>

12. Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography. SDMS position statement: Point-of-care ultrasound imaging. September 2011. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://www.sdms.org/about/who-we-are/sdms-position-statements>

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*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 Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB).

*Source:*

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