Midwives and Birth in the United States

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional association representing certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) in the United States. According to the American Midwifery Certification Board, as of February 2019, there were 12,218 CNMs and 102 CMs. The majority of midwives in the United States are CNMs.  

In 2017, CNMs/CMs attended 351,968 births—a slight increase compared to 2016. In 2017, CNMs/CMs attended 85% of all midwife-attended births and 9.1% of total US births. (2017 is the most recent year for which birth data are available from the National Center for Health Statistics.)

Midwifery Practice

CNMs are licensed, independent health care providers with prescriptive authority in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and USVI. CNMs are defined as primary care providers under federal law.

CMs are licensed, independent health care providers who have completed the same midwifery education as CNMs. CMs are authorized to practice in Delaware, Maine, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. CMs have prescriptive authority in New York, Rhode Island and Maine. The first accredited CM education program began in 1996. The CM credential is not yet recognized in all states.

Midwifery Education

Standards for education and certification in midwifery are identical for CNMs and CMs.

The Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) is the official accrediting body for CNM/CM education programs. There are 38 ACME-accredited midwifery education programs in the United States.

Approximately 82% of CNMs have a master’s degree. As of 2010, a graduate degree is required for entry to midwifery practice as a CNM/CM.

4.8% of CNMs have doctoral degrees, the highest proportion of all APRN groups.

REFERENCES

1. American Midwifery Certification Board
2. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 67, No. 8, November 7, 2018
4. ACNM Core Data Survey, 2010
5. Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education
6. Mandatory Degree Requirements for Entry into Midwifery Practice, ACNM Position Statement, July 2009

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