

ACNM Guidance on Member Conflicts and Grievances

In March 2020, ACNM investigated the options available to the organization for member-to-member conflict resolution. This included working with the Board of Directors, ACNM CEO, and ACNM's legal counsel to better understand ACNM's role in addressing particular situations that have been described as conflicts between and among members, not disputes between CNMS/CMs and their clients. These situations have arisen in different manners, generally originating as clashes of different opinions and viewpoints of members.

The overall scope of ACNM's endeavors is set forth in the purposes and objectives clauses of the ACNM Articles of Incorporation. Further, ACNM has established a system of rules and requirements of conduct in its varying policies. These include the ACNM Leadership Guidelines of Ethical Conduct, ACNM Code of Conduct, and the ACNM Bylaw provisions pertaining to the suspension and expulsion of members.

The ACNM rules establish the extent of acceptable and unacceptable conduct by ACNM leaders (the Leadership Guidelines) and by members participating in ACNM communication and on-line forums (the ACNM CONNECT Code of Conduct). In general, these ACNM rules are intended to ensure that members – when interacting in ACNM programs, in client relationships, and in ACNM leadership positions – treat others with dignity, decency, and professionally.

ACNM is authorized to take action to prohibit, halt, and punish actions in violation of the membership conduct rules of participation, including if necessary, removal of recalcitrant or repeat offenders from ACNM events or membership. Similarly, the Leadership Guidelines can, in extreme cases, be enforced by a process of removal of an offending director or officer. As is expected of membership organizations, those in governance have the power, when warranted, to suspend or remove members from membership.

In contrast, ACNM rules do not authorize much less obligate ACNM to adjudicate disputes between or among members. Those matters fall outside of ACNM's corporate purposes. Further, ACNM lacks the expertise and capacity to do so. Those are private matters, left for resolution by courts of law and other tribunals that have specific authority and expertise to exercise in such situations. One further impediment to trying to adjudicate private disputes among members is that ACNM might unintentionally violate antitrust laws thereby exposing itself to liability. If an ACNM member is engaging in misrepresentation, abuse, negligence, and any other prohibited conduct as identified in the American Midwifery Certification Board's (AMCB) Discipline Policy and Procedures which can be accessed here, please contact AMCB at <https://www.amcbmidwife.org/about-amcb/contact-us>.

ACNM does not want any of its members to be hurt when participating in ACNM programs. Any ACNM member who experiences bias, racism, and/or discrimination when participating in an ACNM program, may report the matter to ACNM's Bias Incident Response Transparency and Healing (BIRTH) Team. The BIRTH team has been created to respond to incidents of bias at ACNM functions – including, but not limited to, ACNM Annual Meetings. The BIRTH team is also available year-round to address reports and “facilitate dialogue” between members who put forth concerns, as well as suggest measures to mitigate the harm to members. The BIRTH Team may be contacted at birthteam@acnm.org.