



July 15, 2009

### **Special Alert to ACNM Members: Recent Developments Related to Attempts to Provide Federal Recognition to All CPMs**

As we enter into the critical next few weeks of federal health reform debate, ACNM continues to devote unprecedented resources to our legislative agenda: reimbursement equity for CNMs and CMs; recognition of CNMs and CMs as primary care providers; inclusion of maternity and newborn care as guaranteed minimum benefits; increased funding for graduate nursing education and loan repayment programs available to CNMs and CMs; funding for women's medical home demonstration projects; and other exciting opportunities. We have made remarkable strides in gaining congressional support and we will need to maintain an aggressive presence to achieve victory on this ambitious agenda that will dramatically enhance access to midwifery care in the US. These are exciting times!

In this whirlwind of legislative activity, ACNM also faces situations in which we must articulate the values and principles of our organization in ways we've not been called upon to do in the past. This week, ACNM expressed to members of Congress our opposition to federal recognition of certified professional midwives (CPMs) who have not successfully completed an accredited formal education program, as covered practitioners under the Social Security Act for the purpose of providing services under Medicare or Medicaid. We did so in response to the recent legislative activities of the Midwives and Mothers in Action (MAMA) Campaign (<http://www.mamacampaign.org/>), a coalition working to gain federal recognition of all CPMs. ACNM's decision to oppose this initiative followed unsuccessful attempts by ACNM and MAMA Campaign leaders to reach a compromise that both organizations could support, and significant reflection by the ACNM Board of Directors regarding the mission (<http://www.midwife.org/about.cfm>) and fundamental principles of our organization.

Read ACNM's letter to Congress on CPM legislation at <http://www.midwife.org/documents/ACNMreMinimumEducationalStdsforMidwives.pdf>.

#### **ACNM's Position**

ACNM's official position is that recognition as a professional midwife in the US requires (1) successful completion of a formal education program accredited by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education; (2) national certification; and (3) licensure in the state in which services are provided. This position was explicitly articulated in ACNM's January 2008 ACNM Issue Brief, "Midwifery Certification in the United States." Through this statement, for the first time, ACNM recognized the value of the

accredited education pathway and certification processes developed by the CPM community, while also clarifying that ACNM does not support apprentice pathways to certification. This position was re-evaluated, slightly revised, and re-issued as an official ACNM Position Statement in March 2009 ([http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/MidwiferyCertification in the United States 3 31 09.pdf](http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/MidwiferyCertification%20in%20the%20United%20States%203%2031%2009.pdf)).

A motion to further revise the position statement to soften ACNM's position regarding the need for formal education was made at the second business meeting of the recent ACNM 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, but was defeated by a majority of the ACNM membership present.

CNMs in the US have supported formal university-based education for more than 80 years. ACNM's intensive engagement this year in federal health care reform as well as our work with the multi-disciplinary Coalition for Patient Rights (<http://www.patientsrightscoalition.org/>) has further reinforced our commitment to these principles. In fact, our current efforts to secure primary care status for CNMs and CMs in federal legislation have been hampered by a perceived lack of formal educational standards in the midwifery profession.

Moreover, ACNM does not believe that lesser standards of education should apply for midwives who are attending home births. In fact, because home birth midwives are frequently working independently with reduced access to consultation with other health care professionals, we believe that they should be among the most highly trained maternity care providers.

There is no precedent for extending federal recognition under the SSA to a class of health care providers who lack a formal education from an accredited health care program or institution. ACNM believes that doing so at this time would be inconsistent with the standards and oversight processes that are well established and provide a critical level of quality assurance in the health professions in the US.

### **The Lack of Uniform Educational Standards in the CPM Credential**

While some CPMs have graduated from an academic program accredited by the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC), others have completed apprentice programs with no minimum educational requirement or qualified faculty oversight. At least half of the 1400 current CPMs have been trained through apprentice routes, according to CPM leaders.

The CPM credential is conferred by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM). Like the vast majority of certifying bodies, including the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB), NARM is accredited by the National Organization for Competency Assurance's National Commission for Certifying Agencies. **Accreditation of the certifying body, however, is not the same as requiring graduation from a formal accredited educational program prior to taking the certification exam.**

### **Midwifery in the Global Context**

The value of formal, accredited education in the health professions is universally recognized. Just this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued new standards calling for initial education of midwives at the bachelor's level from accredited institutions with qualified midwifery faculty. As a nation with a well-developed health care infrastructure, the US should lead the way in professional standards—not accept a lesser standard for midwifery than any other health care profession.

The WHO standards are located at

[http://www.who.int/hrh/nursing\\_midwifery/hrh\\_global\\_standards\\_education.pdf](http://www.who.int/hrh/nursing_midwifery/hrh_global_standards_education.pdf).

### **In Closing**

ACNM sincerely applauds the progress that the CPM community has made in moving toward a framework of professional standards and processes for CPM education and credentialing. However, the lack of a uniform standard of accredited formal education remains a critical missing component. Until the CPM credential includes this uniform educational standard, ACNM must oppose federal recognition of CPMs without the above credentials.

ACNM leaders appreciate that this is a challenging and even emotional issue for many ACNM members who value the passionate energy that CPMs have helped to generate for midwifery and out-of-hospital birth. We understand that many of our members work with CPMs directly or in other ways.

We strongly support the right of women to have choices in childbirth and that the current maternity care system does not always meet their needs. In many venues on the federal and state level, ACNM works to support these choices and to improve the maternity care system and enhance the availability of high-quality midwifery care to all women in all settings.

ACNM looks forward to the day when there is one unified profession of midwifery, with unified standards for education and credentialing, working toward common goals. In the meantime, we continue to maintain our long-held standards for academic preparation and clinical practice and we will continue our dialogue with our CPM colleagues in the interest of one day attaining that goal.

Continue to look for news on ACNM legislative priorities in ACNM's *Quick e-news* and the ACNM web site in the coming weeks and months as Congressional leaders work to enact federal health care reform. ACNM has been and continues to be well represented in Washington and through our hard-working Government Affairs Committee and federal lobbyist Patrick Cooney, who have worked tirelessly to build congressional support to enhance access to midwifery care.

ACNM members wishing to express their views on this or other federal legislative issues are encouraged to contact ACNM at [leadership@acnm.org](mailto:leadership@acnm.org).