



November 21, 2011

Cathy Rick, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE  
Chief of Nursing  
Veterans Health Administration  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Ms. Rick:

On behalf of the members of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), I am writing to request an opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss the role midwives can play within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in addressing the needs of female veterans and their families.

Midwifery as practiced by Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNM®) and Certified Midwives (CM®) encompasses a full range of primary health care services for women from adolescence beyond menopause. These services include primary care, gynecologic and family planning services, preconception care, care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period, care of the normal newborn during the first 28 days of life, and treatment of male partners for sexually transmitted infections. Midwives provide initial and ongoing comprehensive assessment, diagnosis and treatment. They conduct physical examinations; prescribe medications including controlled substances and contraceptive methods; admit, manage and discharge patients; order and interpret laboratory and diagnostic tests and order the use of medical devices. Midwifery care also includes health promotion, disease prevention, and individualized wellness education and counseling. These services are provided in partnership with women and families in diverse settings such as ambulatory care clinics, private offices, community and public health systems, homes, hospitals and birth centers.

As you know, CNMs and CMs are not presently appointed as health professionals within the VHA. ACNM believes this is because historically there have not been many female veterans of childbearing age and so the demand for maternity care services has been low. However, today there is growing demand for maternity care services provided by CNMs and CMs, and the population of female veterans of childbearing age has certainly been on the rise. Equally important, the demand for primary care services is high and midwives can play a larger role in assisting female veterans in accessing these critical services, as they do within all other federal health programs including Medicare, Medicaid, the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program, Indian Health Service, and within the active duty health system of the U.S. Department of Defense.

CNM/CM scope of practice aligns well with the VHA mission and vision. CNMs/CMs provide exceptional health care with the highest quality that promotes healing and health. We respect human dignity, individuality and diversity among groups. Today, CNMs play a significant role in the health and well being of the active duty military population. ACNM advocates continuity of care for veterans with a seamless transition from active duty health care services to the VHA, to include access to high quality, cost effective midwifery services.

We seek an opportunity to discuss the potential role of CNMs and CMs within the VHA at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lorrie Kline Kaplan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lorrie Kline Kaplan,  
Executive Director