

ACNM Unveils New Vision, Enhanced Mission, and Core Values

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Since the College's inception in 1929, midwifery and the ACNM community have grown and evolved. Today, we represent both certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. As we move forward, we must find a way to embrace our diverse identities so we can unite around our calling

to serve women and families.

We are at a critically important time for advancing midwifery in the US and globally and engaging in crucial conversations with other midwifery organizations following a series of recent landmark events, including:

- New International Confederation of Midwives Global Standards for Education, Regulation, and Association;
- The Home Birth Summit and resulting consensus statements; and
- A major study by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) revealing a steadily diminishing obstetrical workforce.

As these remarkable events converged, the ACNM Board of Directors agreed that now is the time to re-examine the principles that will guide our path. In fall 2011, we engaged Jones Public Affairs (JPA), a woman-owned health care communications agency to 1) conduct a thorough audit of all ACNM core documents; 2) analyze our current communications and public relations channels; 3) assess ACNM's competitive position in the women's health organizational landscape; and 4) conduct market research on the key issues shaping

that landscape. As part of phase one of this process, our Rapid Reactor Panel (see sidebar) helped ACNM take a hard look at who we are and the values we share. Thanks to your help, we are pleased to announce an update to ACNM's core identity statements: our vision, mission, and core values.

Our Vision and Mission

One of JPA's first recommendations was that ACNM create a vision statement to express where we are going as an organization and the future we wish to create. We also agreed that we should revisit our mission statement and more prominently highlight the core values that distinguish us.

ACNM has an impressive history, and our members share a vision for the future of maternity and women's health care. Our differences sometimes cause us to lose sight of that vision. It was exciting as a governing board to confront this reality and rediscover our core principles.

ACNM's Vision

Advance the health and well-being of women and newborns by setting the standard for midwifery excellence.

We proudly assert our belief that midwifery should be the standard of care for women, and our deep commitment to excellence. **Midwifery must be synonymous with excellence in actual practice as well as in the perceptions of the public, policymakers, and other clinicians.** It is in the perceptions of others that we have the greatest distance to travel. We must face this challenge.

ACNM's Mission

ACNM works to establish midwifery as the standard of care for women. We lead

the profession through education, clinical practice, research, and advocacy.

The mission and vision statements were strongly supported by our Rapid Reactor Panel. Here are just a few of the comments members shared:

- *Love the clarity and conciseness, and promulgating midwifery as the standard of care in a proactive way is the clarion call we need!*
- *Less is more in both these statements and it works very well. The essentials are present and amazingly simple.*
- *Very concise, succinct, well-written and say what I believe about the profession and why I want to be a midwife.*

Core Values

Our beliefs and principles are powerfully articulated in our philosophy and hallmarks of midwifery care (stated in ACNM's Core Competencies). We have adapted and updated these in the form of core organizational values.

Excellence—ACNM values excellence in midwifery education, clinical practice, and research. We are committed to upholding the highest clinical and ethical standards, professional responsibility, accountability, and integrity.

Evidence-Based Care—ACNM evaluates, publishes, and showcases scientific evidence to improve professional practice. We are committed to upholding the most rigorous clinical practice standards in the midwifery profession and applying this knowledge and clinical expertise to help women make the best health decisions. We strongly support the use of quality measurement to improve care.

Formal Education—ACNM promotes certification of midwives based on comple-

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tion of nationally recognized, accredited midwifery education programs in accordance with the International Confederation of Midwives global standards for education. We support the interprofessional education of midwives with other health professionals to improve maternity care and women's health services.

Inclusiveness—ACNM celebrates and supports a diverse midwifery profession. ACNM embraces those prepared dually in nursing and midwifery and those prepared directly in midwifery.

Woman-Centered Care—The woman is at the core of our practice. ACNM and its members respect a woman's lifecycle events. We approach life events, such as puberty, birth, and menopause, as physiologic transitions that are best supported by education and midwifery expertise.

Primary Care—ACNM members provide primary and maternity care services to help women of all ages and their newborns attain, regain, and maintain health. We emphasize health promotion and education, disease prevention, and informed decision-making.

Partnership—Our members build partnerships with women and their families by listening and providing information, guidance, and counseling in a shared decision-making process. We partner with other members of the health care team through collaboration and referral to provide optimal care and to advance the integration of midwifery care into the health care system.

Advocacy—ACNM amplifies women's voices on health issues. We advocate on behalf of women and families, our members, and the midwifery profession to eliminate health disparities and increase access to evidence-based, quality care. This includes the promotion of standards for entry to practice and continuing competency; funding for education and reimbursement for services; and increasing the visibility and recognition of the value of midwifery care.

Global Outreach—ACNM promotes the profession of midwifery globally.

Rapid Reactor Panel

ACNM invited all members to join a Rapid Reactor Panel to preview and provide feedback to the College's new vision, mission, and core values. With more than 450 member responses, the results were extremely positive: 96.4% of participants expressed alignment with the draft vision and mission statements, 96.3% agreed with the core values, and 97.7% felt that the values were important to them individually. Members provided helpful comments on the wording of the statements, all of which were considered and some of which were adopted. *Thank you Rapid Reactor Panelists!*

We foster quality and innovation in midwifery education and support the strengthening of the profession worldwide through education, regulation, and association-building as keys to improving maternal and newborn health.

What's in a Name? Taking Stock of Our Name and Brand

Over the years, ACNM members have debated changing our name to the American College of Midwives (or similar). To provide information and insight into this ongoing debate, we asked two professional communications agencies—JPA and the Maia Marketing Group—to review and consider the following questions and provide a recommendation to the ACNM Board:

- Is ACNM's name consistent with our vision, mission, and core values?
- Can we best achieve our goals with our existing name or with a new name?

In 2011, the Maia Marketing Group suggested that ACNM undertake an internal alignment process before considering a name change—a step that JPA has already helped us achieve through our new identity statements.

The analysis conducted by JPA reveals that ACNM has amassed significant “brand equity” that would be lost in a name change, diverting precious resources at

a critical time of opportunity. Thus, they have strongly recommended that **ACNM should retain its current name at this point**. Our upcoming consumer campaign will leverage our current good name to advance our core values and enhance the visibility and stature of midwives and midwifery in the United States. This includes working with ALL of our members and across all affiliates to use that enhanced visibility to foster regulation and policies supportive of accessible and high quality midwifery care for all women. We need to work together to build that future and at that point can revisit our name.

In the US, our profession has grown up with a connection to nursing, but our members hold very different opinions about that connection. The JPA team found this association with nursing to be very positive, citing a December 2011 Gallup poll in which nursing topped the list of trustworthy professions for the 12th time in 13 years.

In contrast, midwifery has not earned this level of consumer awareness and trust. We attend less than 8% of all births. A 2008 JPA survey for ACNM found that only 10.9% of women say they've used a midwife for their reproductive health care, and 48% of women say it “never occurred” to them to use a midwife for their reproductive health care. **These benchmarks must be improved before we embark on a name change.**

Many of us are passionate about the name change question, and our Board of Directors has members in both camps. Having communications experts analyze ACNM's brand with an open mind has been invaluable. As we move more assertively into consumer communications, we will specifically track and report our progress in enhancing the midwifery brand, and make this information available to facilitate future discussion of our name. We look forward to working with you in this exciting new chapter for our organization and our profession.

Read more at www.midwife.org/about. 

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