

POSITION STATEMENT

Certified Nurse-Midwife and Certified Midwife Education and Certification in the United States

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional organization that sets national educational and practice standards for certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs). The education and certification standards in midwifery are identical for CNMs and CMs, and the difference between the 2 credentials reflects the background of the individual before entering professional midwifery. Both enter the profession with degrees in a variety of fields and complete coursework in the sciences and social sciences; however, only CNMs enter midwifery as registered nurses (RNs). This document provides a brief overview of the education, credentials, and certification processes for CNMs and CMs.¹

Core Competencies

Entry-level competencies that must be mastered in all education programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) are standardized in ACNM's *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice*.² This document was developed by ACNM, is reviewed every 5 years, and is revised as needed. The curricular standards for midwifery education programs have been set by ACNM since 1962.³⁻⁶

Midwifery Education Programs

All midwifery education programs associated with the certification of CNMs and CMs are in or affiliated with institutions of higher learning that are accredited by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education. Midwifery graduate programs accredited by ACME grant master's or doctoral degrees or are affiliated with schools that offer graduate degree completion options. ACME is an autonomous accrediting agency and has been recognized continuously by the US Department of Education since 1982. Standardized criteria developed by ACME are used to assess the quality and content of midwifery education.⁷ A complete list of currently accredited programs and institutions is provided on the ACNM website.⁸

Certification Process for CNMs and CMs

The American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) is an autonomous certifying organization accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. The functions of the AMCB include initial certification of CNMs/CMs for entry into clinical practice, recertification, and

discipline. Candidates must graduate from an ACME-accredited program to be eligible to sit for the national certification examination administered by the AMCB. Individuals who successfully complete AMCB certification requirements are granted certificates as CNMs or CMs. Certification is maintained through a certificate maintenance program that requires continuing education and successful completion of learning modules. CNMs and CMs are educated to meet the same high standards that every state in the United States has recognized as the legal basis for AMCB-certified midwives' practice.

Global Standards for Midwifery Education

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) has defined a midwife as a person who

*having been regularly admitted to a midwifery education program duly recognized in the country in which it is located, has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery and acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery.*⁹

The education standards for CNMs and CMs exceed the minimum educational requirements set forth by the ICM.¹⁰

The Legal Status of Midwifery

CNMs can be licensed to practice in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US territories. However, the specifics of licensure and regulations related to midwifery practice and prescriptive authority vary widely among the states. At this time, CMs can be licensed as such in Washington, DC and the following 9 states: Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and Virginia. As an organization, ACNM supports efforts to legally recognize CMs as qualified midwifery practitioners who are granted the same scope of practice, rights, and responsibilities as CNMs.

Standards of Practice

CNM/CMs practice according to ACNM standards for the practice of midwifery.¹¹ The standards for the practice of midwifery are reviewed regularly and revised as needed to ensure that they are supported by the most current evidence available.

REFERENCES

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Note: Midwifery and midwife as used throughout this document refer to the education and practice of certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB).

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