

POSITION STATEMENT

Midwifery Student Prior Experience

In recognition that students who wish to enter midwifery education programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) bring varied strengths and talents to the profession, and that these experiences may not necessarily include labor and birth experience as a registered nurse (RN), the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) affirms that:

- The discipline of midwifery is separate from the discipline of nursing.
- Nursing experience in labor and birth is not a prerequisite for midwifery education or successful working relationships with clinical preceptors.
- Nursing experience in labor and birth is not a requirement for students entering midwifery education programs accredited by ACME.
- Nursing experience in labor and birth is not required for newly graduated student midwives to sit for or pass the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) national certification examination, nor is it considered required preparation for entry into basic midwifery practice.

Background

In the United States, the AMCB certifies midwives following a midwifery education program as certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) (if they have an active RN at the time of the exam) or certified midwives (CMs). The 2 credentials confer the same scope of practice, and CNMs and CMs are equally respected for their contributions to health care. ACNM endorses the CNM and CM credentials and, by extension, supports all midwifery students enrolled in CNM and CM programs regardless of their prior nursing experience in labor and birth. Through this endorsement, ACNM acknowledges that the discipline of midwifery is separate from the discipline of nursing. Although both disciplines involve clinical care, midwives and nurses have different professional obligations, skills, and responsibilities for patient assessment.

Currently, more than 70% of the ACME-accredited midwifery education programs in the United States do not require students to have prior nursing experience in labor and birth (K. Jefferson, unpublished ACNM survey, April 2022). In addition, nearly half of all midwifery education programs admit students with a bachelor's degree in a field other than nursing.¹ Midwives who enter the profession with experience in other disciplines or fields of nursing other than labor and birth have varied talents and strengths that enrich the profession. A 2018 study of an ACME-accredited midwifery education program demonstrated that

program completion was not significantly associated with students' status as nurses prior to admission, labor and delivery nursing experience, length of nursing experience, nursing degree held, presence of children at home, working while in school, or undergraduate grade point average.²

ACNM acknowledges the need for well-constructed, multisite research regarding the outcomes of midwifery students related to prior experience.

Midwifery education programs accredited by ACME are designed to support midwifery as a stand-alone profession as globally acknowledged by the International Confederation of Midwives and ACNM.³ In addition, these midwifery education programs provide quality, state-of-the-art training in midwifery skills and clinical practice. All midwifery students are required to have current certifications in neonatal resuscitation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and electronic fetal monitoring before they provide clinical care. Classroom educators, clinical educators, preceptors, and midwifery employers will best address the current health care workforce needs by thoughtfully crafting education programs for all qualified students.

REFERENCES

1. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Midwifery education programs. Accessed April 11, 2022. <https://portal.midwife.org/education/education-programs>
2. Niemczyk NA, Cutts A, Perlman DB. Prior work and educational experience are not associated with successful completion of a master's-level, distance education midwifery program. *J Midwifery Womens Health*. 2018;63(2):161-167. doi:10.1111/jmwh.12716
3. International Confederation of Midwives. *ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education*. Revised 2021. Accessed April 11, 2022. https://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/files/general-files/2021/09/global-standards-for-midwifery-education_2021_en.pdf

Note. The terms *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).

Source: Division of Education

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