



Home Birth: Resources for Payers and Policymakers

Midwifery is an Autonomous Profession



Independent midwifery practice is supported by abundant evidence on the effectiveness of autonomous, professional midwifery care.^{1- 10}

ACNM's position is that "midwifery practice is the independent management of women's health care, focusing particularly on common primary care issues, family planning and gynecologic needs of women, pregnancy, childbirth, the postpartum period and care of the newborn. The practice occurs within a health care system that provides for consultation, collaborative management or referral as indicated by the health status of the client."¹¹ As with the practice of medicine, the education and practice of modern professional midwifery has been developed over decades by ACNM and other organizations and governments throughout the world. Exemplary competence-based standards, accreditation of educational programs, and certification and licensure standards that provide for oversight of education, practice, and continuing competency in the profession are all well established. Professional midwives have adopted evidence-based knowledge, procedures and technologies for practice and facilitated continuity of care by advocating for and participating in seamless systems of care for all women and childbearing families. Midwifery researchers continue to contribute to the development of this evidence base for practice. Standards for consultation, collaboration and referral to other health professionals, when indicated, are inherent in our model of care.

Barriers to practice for professional midwives still exist in the US, creating a vacuum of qualified providers and leading some women to seek unqualified, unregulated practitioners. Some women even resort to unattended birth in an effort to gain control over their birth experiences.

ACNM considers it vital to ensure proper CNM/CM representation on regulatory boards overseeing our practice to ensure that decision-making on scope of practice and other critical issues is appropriate and well-informed. An appropriately configured board of midwifery would most effectively meet this need.

- ❖ *We strongly urge payers and policymakers to support the continued autonomy of professional midwifery and ACNM's state policy agenda to ensure a qualified midwifery workforce.*

¹ International Confederation of Midwives, Position Statement: Collaboration and Partnerships for Healthy Women and Infants. Available at: <http://internationalmidwives.org/Portals/5/Documentation/Collaboration%20&%20partnerships%20for%20healthy%20women%20and%20infants2002.doc> . Accessed 08/01, 2008.

² Davies J, Hey E, Reid W, Young G. Prospective regional study of planned home births. *BMJ* 1996; 313: 1302-1306.

³ Johnson K, Daviss B. Outcomes of planned home birth with certified professional midwives: Large prospective study in North America. *BMJ* 2005; 330: 1416.

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- ⁴ Ackermann-Lieblich U, Voegeli T, Gunter-Witt K. Home versus hospital deliveries: Follow up study of matched pairs for procedures and outcomes. *BMJ* 1996;313:1313-1318.
- ⁵ Wiegers. Outcome of planned home and planned hospital births in low risk pregnancies. *BMJ*.
- ⁶ Cawthon. Planned home births: outcomes among Medicaid women in Washington State. Washington Department of Social and Health Services.
- ⁷ Olsen O, Jewell M. Home versus hospital births. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2005;4.
- ⁸ Janssen. Outcomes of planned hospital birth attended by midwives compared with physicians in British Columbia. *Birth*.
- ⁹ Hutton E, Reitsma A, Kaufman K. Outcomes of planned homebirths compared with a matched cohort of planned hospital births in women attended by Ontario midwives from 2006-06 (N=13984). Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada 64th Annual Clinical Meeting; Calgary, Canada. 2008.
- ¹⁰ Anderson RE, Murphy PA. Outcomes of 11,788 planned home births attended by certified nurse-midwives. A retrospective descriptive study. *J Nurse Midwifery* 1995;40:483-492.
- ¹¹ ACNM Position Statement "Independent Midwifery Practice". Available at http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/Independent_Mid_Prac_05.pdf. Accessed 08/27, 2008.