



Midwifery in the United States

The midwifery model of care is a patient-centered approach that views pregnancy and childbirth as normal physiologic life processes. The nationally certified midwives who practice this model of care are educated healthcare professionals specializing in evidence-based and relationship-driven reproductive health care particularly during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. Midwives focus on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of their clients, providing education, counseling, and hands-on assistance throughout the childbearing cycle, for healthy low- and moderate-risk pregnancies, focusing on natural childbirth and minimizing medical interventions. Additionally, nationally certified midwives may also offer services related to primary care, sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and newborn care.

There are **three nationally recognized credentials for midwives** in the United States: Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), Certified Midwives (CMs), and Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs). Together they represent a total of 18,000 underutilized healthcare providers.

Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs)

CNMs complete graduate-level midwifery programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME). They pass a national certification exam administered by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) to receive the professional designation of CNM because they are also educated as nurses. CNMs are primary care providers for women from adolescence throughout the lifespan as well as caring for the healthy newborn during the first 28 days of life. Their scope of practice encompasses the independent provision of care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period; sexual and reproductive health; gynecologic health; and family planning services, including preconception care. There are currently 14,719 CNMs in the US, and they are licensed in all 50 states and jurisdictions.

Certified Midwives (CMs)

CMs complete graduate-level midwifery programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME). They pass a national certification exam administered by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) to receive the professional designation of CM. CMs are primary care providers for women from adolescence throughout the lifespan as well as caring for the healthy newborn during the first 28 days of life. Their scope of practice encompasses the independent provision of care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period; sexual and reproductive health; gynecologic health; and family planning services, including preconception care. There are currently 140 CMs in the US, and they are licensed in 12 states and the District of Columbia.

Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs)

There are multiple pathways to achieving the CPM credential, including completing undergraduate, graduate or certificate programs accredited by the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC). CPMs pass a national certification exam administered by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) to receive the professional designation of CPM. Certified professional midwives provide essential care throughout the childbearing cycle, including the prenatal, birth, postpartum, and newborn periods. CPMs specialize in community birth and are required to have experience in home or birth center settings for certification. They own more than half the birth centers in the U.S. and staff more than 75%, addressing critical gaps in access to community-based maternity services. There are 3,500 CPMs in the US and they are licensed in 39 states and DC.

Midwives currently attend 12 percent of all births in the United States, most of which take place in hospitals, compared to countries like Great Britain where midwives deliver half of all babies, and Sweden, Norway, and France where midwives oversee the majority of expectant and new mothers. All these countries have much lower rates of maternal and infant mortality than we do in the U.S. (ACNM 2023; GAO 2023; ProPublica 2018)

In the U.S., where over 35% of counties are considered maternity care deserts, nationally certified midwives are a critical part of the solution. Creating and protecting funding streams for all accredited midwifery education, expanding state licensure, and achieving federal recognition of CMs and CPMs, as well as creating system integration for all nationally certified midwives, is essential to addressing the maternity care crisis in America.

The following national organizations are working in coalition to promote federal legislation that supports these goals:

American Association of Birth Centers (AABC)

AABC is a multi-disciplinary membership organization comprised of freestanding birth centers, alongside midwifery units, individuals and organizations that support the birth center model. For 40 years, the American Association of Birth Centers has been the nation's most comprehensive resource on birth centers. AABC has built a solid foundation for growth in birth centers by promoting state regulations, advocating for sustainable insurance reimbursement, developing a quality improvement program, establishing national standards, establishing recognized accreditation through the Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers, providing an forum for discussion of issues, educating parents, professionals, and policy-makers to the birth center concept, conducting major research, and providing a national dataset to inform evidence-based practice

American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)

ACNM is the professional association that represents advanced practice midwives (i.e., Certified Nurse-Midwives and Certified Midwives) in the United States. ACNM's members are primary health care clinicians who provide evidence-based midwifery care for women throughout the lifespan, with an emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, gynecologic, care for the newborn, and reproductive health care. ACNM works to promote equity and inclusion throughout the midwifery profession and across the care continuum to ensure better healthcare outcomes for the people midwives serve.

Birth Center Equity (BCE)

BCE works to ensure that every community has access to safe, loving midwifery care, by investing in birth centers led by Black, Indigenous, people of color. BCE is a national catalyst growing community birth infrastructure, resources, power, and innovation, grounded in a network of nearly 60 birth centers led by Black, Indigenous, people of color, spanning 26 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM)

NACPM is the national professional organization for Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs). NACPM works to expand access to midwifery care by advocating for licensure, equitable reimbursement, and the full integration of midwives into the healthcare system. As part of a broader community of midwifery professionals, NACPM supports policies that protect midwives' autonomy, honor the cultural and historical roots of the profession, remove barriers to practice, and increase consumer access to these services. In partnership with national and state leaders, NACPM is committed to making sure all credentialed midwives can practice to the full extent of their training and provide safe, high-quality care to all families in the U.S.

Policy Institute for Community Birth and Midwifery (PICBM)

PICBM is a national nonprofit addressing the maternal health crisis by championing community-based midwifery and safe, accessible birth options across the U.S. In a country where more people die from pregnancy and childbirth than in any other high-income nation, PICBM advances proven solutions: direct-entry midwives and community birth settings. PICBM serves as a trusted policy resource and partner to advocates, legislators, and health leaders across the country. We develop policy strategy, provide technical assistance, convene national coalitions and initiatives to strengthen the midwifery workforce, educate and partner with federal and state policy makers, and conduct research.