

MIDWIVES AND MOTHERS IN ACTION (MAMA) CAMPAIGN

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL MIDWIVES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q: Who are Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs)?

A: Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) are nationally credentialed midwives who provide primary maternity care. CPMs are:

- Trained to provide health-promoting and preventive care that is evidence-based, incorporates best practices and avoids overuse of drugs and interventions
- The only maternity care providers specifically trained to attend births outside the hospital
- Independent practitioners who have met the standards for certification set by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM)
- Licensed to practice in 23 states
- A rapidly growing segment of the midwifery profession in the U.S. today

Q: What kind of care is provided by Certified Professional Midwives?

A: Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) provide thorough care throughout the prenatal, delivery and postnatal stages of childbearing to women who are healthy and experiencing a normal pregnancy. The Certified Professional Midwife:

- Monitors the physical, psychological and social well-being of the mother throughout the childbearing cycle
- Provides the mother with individualized education and counseling that emphasizes health promotion and the prevention of pregnancy problems
- Provides hands-on assistance during labor and delivery, and postpartum support
- Identifies and refers the few women who need obstetrical attention

This kind of care results in healthy outcomes for mothers, babies and families, with high rates of full term, full weight babies and breastfeeding.

Q: Is the Certified Professional Midwife Credential nationally recognized?

A: Yes. The Certified Professional Midwife credential was established in 1994 and is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the same agency that accredits the Certified Nurse-Midwife. The NCCA is the accrediting body of the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA).

Q: How are Certified Professional Midwives trained and credentialed?

A: CPMs are trained in a variety of settings under the supervision of qualified instructors. Using a competency based system to validate multiple routes of midwifery education, their training and education may occur in a classroom, private practice, or clinical setting but must include a minimum number of types of clinical experiences, including out-of-hospital births. Knowledge and skills are evaluated by qualified instructors. The education and training process generally takes 3 to 5 years to complete.

- The CPM credentialing process is administered by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM)
- Detailed requirements for knowledge, skills, abilities and experience are defined by the NARM Job Analyses, following the standards set by the NCCA
- All Certified Professional Midwives must meet the same requirements
- The final step in the certification process is national testing, which includes a hands-on Skills Assessment and an 8-hour Written Examination

Q: What is the difference between Certified Professional Midwives and Certified Nurse Midwives?

A: Certified Professional Midwives are the only nationally credentialed midwives specifically trained in out-of-hospital birth, and offer services at home and in birth centers. The education of the Certified Professional Midwife is designed for care provided to women in pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum periods. Certified Professional Midwives are

nationally credentialed, with multiple routes of entry to the profession. Regardless of route to the credential, the same rigorous requirements must be met, including a didactic curriculum and a supervised practicum. Having multiple routes to the profession promotes increased access to and diversity in the profession.

Certified Nurse Midwives are nationally credentialed and enter the profession through nursing with additional training in midwifery. Certified Nurse Midwives are not required to have any training or experience in out-of-hospital birth, and very few choose to practice in out-of-hospital settings. The education of the Certified Nurse Midwife also includes advanced practice in gynecology and well-woman care.

Q: What kinds of barriers prevent more women from choosing Certified Professional Midwives for their prenatal care and birth?

A: Of the twenty-three states that now provide a path to licensure for Certified Professional Midwives, only 11 include CPMs in their state Medicaid programs, largely due to the absence of federal recognition of these services. This falls short of genuine and consistent patient choice. Certified Professional Midwives and women who want access to their services are seeking Medicaid reimbursement for those services as one important step to increase access to this kind of maternity care.

Q: What is the status of Medicaid coverage of Certified Professional Midwife services?

A: Certified Professional Midwife services are not currently covered under Medicaid at the federal level. Eleven states have opted, through waiver or state plan amendment (SPA), to cover Certified Professional Midwife services, but the vast majority of states receive no federal match for these services. By contrast, states are required to cover Certified Nurse Midwife services under federal law.

Q: What are tangible advantages of Certified Professional Midwife services?

A: Midwife-attended births at home and in birth centers have excellent outcomes and cost much less than hospital deliveries that account for \$86 billion a year of U.S. healthcare costs. Advantages include:

- **Excellent outcomes at lower cost:** much lower rates of expensive medical interventions, with outcomes at least as good as outcomes for low-risk births in hospitals, according to a study of 5,400 home births attended by Certified Professional Midwives
- **Healthier babies:** fewer babies compromised by prematurity, low birth weight and effects of overused medical interventions, such as induction and cesarean section, that lead to costly stays in Neonatal Intensive Care Units and future health challenges
- **Medicaid savings:** Each mother on Medicaid who chooses an out-of-hospital birth with a Certified Professional Midwife will lower Medicaid costs, since Medicaid would otherwise be paying for a hospital birth at greater cost and with much greater likelihood of cesarean section
- **Savings to state Medicaid programs:** Washington State Medicaid saved almost \$500,000 over a two-year budget cycle with licensed midwives attending just 2% of the births, according to an analysis by the Washington State Department of Health
- **Overcoming disparities:** Certified Professional Midwives have provided care that effectively overcame expected disparities in childbirth outcomes.

Additional Information:

1. "CPM Issue Brief - Certified Professional Midwives in the United States" - <http://www.nacpm.org/cpm-issue-brief.html>
2. "Milbank Report: *Evidence-Based Maternity Care*" - <http://www.childbirthconnection.org/article.asp?ck=10575>
3. "State of American Childbirth" Citizens for Midwifery fact sheet - <http://cfmidwifery.org/pdf/StateMatCare2005CfM.pdf>
4. "Midwifery Licensure and Discipline Program in Washington State: Economic Costs and Benefits" – http://www.washingtonmidwives.org/assets/Midwifery_Cost_Study_10-31-07.pdf