

NACPM Initiative: CPM Workforce Development

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In a maternity care system gone terribly awry, Certified Professional Midwives provide unique and critical access to normal physiologic birth, a service which profoundly benefits mothers and newborns. Increasing access to CPM care holds promise for improving outcomes for all women, reducing disparities in birth outcomes for women of color, and significantly lowering health care costs. While the number of CPMs is growing each year, we are not meeting the need for midwives in sufficient numbers across the U.S. to truly impact maternity care for all women.

NACPM frequently hears from CPMs these days who want to know how they can participate in the changing landscape for health care delivery generated by the Affordable Care Act. Although NACPM is committed to exploring local possibilities for participation with CPMs in the states, the hard truth is that the profession of Certified Professional Midwifery is not developed enough to fully participate. In spite of all of the exemplary work that has been done over the last several decades to develop for CPMs the three pillars of a profession - education, regulation and association, there is much more work to be done.

Therefore, we have been called to take action that would:

- Increase the numbers of CPMs
- Improve diversity within the profession
- Increase the number of education programs and clinical training sites
- Strengthen, support and expand the preceptor workforce
- Improve access to education, including federal funding for education & loan repayment programs
- Assure access to CPM care within the maternity care system

Before we can develop and implement an action plan, we will gather all available information about the current status of CPMs, solicit information and advice from our allies, develop new funding to support a comprehensive workforce analysis, and gather input from experts in the fields of workforce analysis, professional education, and health policy. We envision creating a comprehensive action plan that will build on the strengths of CPM education and practice, make the case for expanding the CPM workforce, describe options for further development, and identify steps that individuals, schools, businesses, and organizations can take to implement the plan.

The Opportunity

For some time, NACPM has been aware of an urgent need to engage with CPMs and stakeholders to support the further development of the CPM profession. This urgency stems from critical needs of the childbearing population in the U.S. It has become imperative with the emergence of a unique set of trends and opportunities over the last several years to increase CPM participation in the health care system, to improve birth outcomes for all women in the U.S. and to inform public policy with the values inherent in CPM care. These include national health care reform and the passage of the Affordable Care Act, growing federal support for improving perinatal outcomes, the maternity care workforce shortage, rising use of non-physician health care providers, and the emerging recognition of the importance of physiologic birth.

To step up to these opportunities, NACPM has spearheaded several initiatives:

- Midwives and Mothers in Action (MAMA) Campaign to achieve federal recognition of CPMs, opening doors to Medicaid reimbursement, expanded private payer reimbursement, increased CPM licensing in all states, federal funding for education, and loan forgiveness and repayment programs
- CPM Symposium 2012, a partnership with the Association of Midwifery Educators (AME), to inform and facilitate a collaborative discussion about the future of the CPM profession. The priorities identified by Symposium participants has informed NACPM strategic direction over the past two years.
- NACPM Pilot Chapters Project to create a powerful unified CPM voice to enhance the state and national influence of CPMs to improve the maternity care system in the U.S., to promote and protect the profession, and to support increased access for all women to the high-quality, high-value care of CPMs. Until now, a structure for relationships among the states, and between the states and a national professional association, has been a significant missing piece in the development of direct-entry midwifery in the United States.

Understanding that we cannot accomplish our work of transforming maternity care and developing the CPM profession without partners, NACPM also participates in a variety of coalitions and collaborations:

- Home Birth Consensus Summit
- Normal Birth Task Force with ACNM and MANA
- Integrative Healthcare Policy Consortium
- Coalition for Quality Maternity Care
- National Quality Forum
- Allied Midwifery Organizations (AMO)
- US Midwifery Education, Regulation and Association Joint Project

The Challenges

These NACPM initiatives and our participation in these national collaborations have provided an opportunity to showcase the role that CPMs can play, and are playing, in improving the quality of maternity care in the U.S. They have also pointed to significant challenges that CPMs and NACPM face in achieving full access for women to the care of CPMs and to full CPM participation in a system being radically reshaped by federal policy.

Of particular note are the concerns we encounter regarding the consistency and quality of CPM education. These concerns are having an adverse effect on our ability to help secure licensure for CPMs in all states, federal recognition of CPMs, CPM participation in the new healthcare delivery systems and payment reforms of the Affordable Care Act, access to federal loan repayment programs, and other opportunities to approach federal agencies to demonstrate the value of CPM care. We anticipate that the workforce analysis will include a deeper examination of CPM education and make recommendations that address the concerns by building on our strengths.

The Initiative

Over the past year, NACPM has been developing an initiative to support, strengthen and expand the CPM workforce. We have sought the advice of experts in the field such as Catherine Dower of the UCSF Center for the Health Professions and Maureen Corry and Carol Sakala of Childbirth Connection. We have begun to formulate the broad outline for a CPM workforce analysis report that would result in specific recommendations and an action plan.

- Examine the current state of maternity care in the U.S., evidence-based recommendations for transforming the maternity care system, and the important role that CPMs can play in the new system of care
- Analyze the CPM workforce to examine current and future midwifery workforce needs, including the opportunities and barriers to training more CPMs, innovations to expand the current set of accredited institutions and programs that train to the CPM and accessibility to these training opportunities
- Explore trends in health professional education and innovations in education that could facilitate the expansion of midwifery education
- Describe the core values and practices of current midwifery education that must be carried forward into any new, expanded system
- Develop a blueprint for action that assures we can prepare the number and kinds of midwives needed to provide the model of maternity care that has been shown to improve the health of women and babies.

We have also started the search for funding to support the first phase of the workforce analysis. This phase will engage a diverse set of stakeholders and leading thinkers, including NARM, MEAC, AME, MANA DOR, ICTC, and NABCC, in collecting data and forming a Task Force to effect the next phases of the plan.

NACPM believes it is time to come together to address our challenges and to work together for full access to exemplary education, consistent access to private and public reimbursement, expanded employment opportunities, licensing for CPMs in all 50 states, as well as participation in emerging health care delivery systems and payment reforms. To compensate for limited resources and daunting challenges, we must be extremely strategic and collect the very best information available to inform decisions as we think and plan to grow the CPM workforce and to meet the needs of women and families.