



## **The Certified Nurse-Midwife**

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The American College of Nurse-Midwives' (ACNM's) mission is to promote the health and well-being of women and newborns within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Midwives believe every individual has the right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations.

### **Q: What education does a nurse-midwife need?**

A Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM) is a registered nurse who has graduated from a nurse-midwifery education program with a master's degree in nursing that is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME). The individual must also pass a national certification examination to receive the professional designation of certified nurse-midwife. Certified midwives are individuals who have or receive a background in a health related field other than nursing and graduate from a midwifery education program accredited by ACME. Graduates of an ACME-accredited midwifery education program take the same national certification examination as CNMs but receive the professional designation of certified midwife. (Currently, there are no CMs practicing in Indiana; they practice in five states on the east coast). Approximately 82% of CNMs have a master's degree or doctorate degree. The ACNM is the professional association that represents CNMs.

### **Q: What does a nurse midwife do?**

Nurse-midwives have been practicing in the United States since WW1. CNMs provide primary health care for women across the lifespan from adolescence beyond menopause, with special emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, and gynecologic and reproductive health. Midwives perform comprehensive physical exams, prescribe medications including contraceptive methods, treat male partners for sexually transmitted infections, care for the normal newborn during the first 28 days of life, order laboratory and other diagnostic tests, and provide health and wellness education and counseling

### **Q: What are the Licensing/Certification requirements to practice?**

CNMs are licensed, independent health care providers with prescriptive authority in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam and Puerto Rico. Nurse-midwifery practice in Indiana is governed by the Indiana State Board of Nursing (ISBN) and is protected by the Indiana Nurse Practice Act. CNMs in Indiana possess a special nurse-midwife license. For those CNMs who prescribe medications, prescriptive authority is granted by the ISBN. A documented collaborative agreement must be on file with the ISBN that stipulates the manner in which the CNM and the MD will collaborate, and any limitations on the CNM's prescriptive authority. The collaborative agreement must specify a review with the collaborating MD of a random sampling of 5% of the CNM's charts and medications prescribed within seven days of the patient visit. Nurse-midwives must pass a national certification examination with the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) which is affiliated with the ACNM, prior to practicing. According to the AMCB, there are 11,546 CNMs/CMs practicing in the United States (Martin et al., 2010).

### **Q: What kinds of patients do CNMs care for?**

In 2008, the number of CNM/CM attended births reached a record high of 317,626 as compared to 4.3 million births per year in the US (Childbirth Connection, 2009). This represents 93.9% of all midwife-attended births, 11.1% of all vaginal births and 7.5% of all births. In 2006, eighty-six billion dollars was used to pay for maternal-



newborn hospital care, exceeding any other condition. Private insurers paid for 49% of the births, while Medicaid covered 43% (Childbirth Connections, 2009). CNMs provide the majority of care to Medicaid recipients. CNM/CM attended births reflect the diversity of the US population. Additionally, 96.1% of CNM/CM attended births occurred in hospitals, 2.1% occurred in freestanding birth centers, and 1.7% occurred in homes

**Q: Where do CNMs practice?**

More than 50% of CNMs/CMs list physician practices or hospitals/medical centers as their principal employers (Fullerton, Schuiling, & Sipe, 2010). While midwives are well-known for attending births, in 2008, 53% of CNMs/CMs identified reproductive care and 33.1% identified primary care as main responsibilities (Fullerton, Schuiling, & Sipe, 2010). CNMs are defined as primary care providers under federal law. In Indiana, the first midwifery practice was established in the 1970s in Lawrenceburg. CNMs in Indiana practice in a variety of settings including hospitals, private practices, birth centers, and home birth practices. Currently, there are approximately 84 CNMs with 70 nurse-midwifery service sites throughout Indiana. In 2009, there were 5,666 CNM-attended births, which was 6.54% of all births that year. In addition, some CNMs work in the academic setting, specifically teaching in the nurse-midwifery program at University of Indianapolis or as preceptors for midwifery students or other learners.

**Q: What is the quality/safety/economic value of CNMs?**

A meta-analysis published 2011 in Nursing Economics extending over 18 years compared care provided by advanced practice registered nurses (APNs) to care provided by physicians. This review demonstrates overwhelming evidence of high quality care of certified nurse-midwives. The categories in which Certified Nurse-Midwives outperformed physicians included: lower C-section rates, fewer epidurals, less analgesia, higher breastfeeding rates, more vaginal births after C-section deliveries, fewer NICU admissions, fewer episiotomies, fewer perineal lacerations after delivery, and lower rates of labor induction and augmentation.

In summary, a nurse-midwife is an excellent choice as a woman's health care provider. As an advocate, partner, coach, and confidant, the midwife lives up to the ACNM motto, "*With women, for a lifetime.*"

**Resources:** American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org)  
Indiana State Board of Nursing (ISBN) [www.in.gov/pla/nursing.htm](http://www.in.gov/pla/nursing.htm)

For more information, contact Barb at [bwinningham@uindy.edu](mailto:bwinningham@uindy.edu)

Dr. Winningham founded and is the Coordinator of the Nurse-Midwifery Track, Coordinator of the Women's Health Nurse Practitioner Track, and Assistant Professor at the University of Indianapolis. She also is employed with Franciscan Alliance as a Nurse-Midwife at St. Francis Family Medicine Residency Program. She has served two terms as the state Chapter Chair for the Indiana Chapter of the ACNM and was the first CNM to be granted hospital privileges at St. Francis and Community South, Indianapolis, IN.