

2021 Policy Initiatives

The Virginia Affiliate of ACNM supports the following legislative proposals for 2021:

- ❖ Licensure for Certified Midwives (CMs)
- ❖ Independent Practice for Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs)

Contrary to global maternal health trends, the US is facing a maternal health crisis: high and rising levels of maternal mortality and morbidity, stark racial disparities, high cost of medical care, and a shortage of maternal health providers projected to worsen in coming years. Increasing access to skilled maternal health care has a direct link to decreasing infant mortality rates and maternal morbidity rates, especially among low-income and Black women. Certified midwives would be a valuable addition to the healthcare workforce in Virginia.

Licensure for Certified Midwives (CMs)

Certified Midwife certification is identical to CNMs, licensed in Virginia since 1975:

- Certified Midwives earn graduate degrees from midwifery education programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME).
- Certified Midwives are board certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB).
- Certified Midwives (CMs) and Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) master the same core competencies, sit for the same board exam, and have identical scopes of practice.

Certified Midwives will increase access to maternal health care:

- CM education programs attract candidates from diverse backgrounds and professions, broadening the midwifery profession. Shenandoah University supports adding a CM program that would attract students and provide a pathway within the Commonwealth.
- Licensure of Certified Midwives grows the women's health workforce and increases access to high quality maternal, gynecologic, and primary care.

CM Licensure is supported by national organizations:

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recognizes CMs and CNMs as independent clinicians and experts in their field of practice.
- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) recognizes the equivalency of CM and CNM scope of practice and supports CM licensure in all states.
- March of Dimes recognizes the equivalency of CM and CNM scope of practice and supports efforts to expand access to midwifery care.
- National Uniform Claim Committee (NUCC) recognizes CMs and CNMs as identical credentials under the umbrella classification "Advanced Practice Midwife."
- CMs are currently licensed in NY, NJ, RI, DE, ME, and HI. Numerous other states are pursuing the recognition of CMs.
- AWHONN Joint Statement in Support of autonomous practice for CMs and CNMs
[https://www.jognn.org/article/S0884-2175\(16\)30003-X/pdf](https://www.jognn.org/article/S0884-2175(16)30003-X/pdf)
- ACOG Statement in Support of autonomous practice for CMs and CNMs
<https://www.acog.org/en/Advocacy/Policy%20Priorities/Midwifery>



Independent Practice for Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs)

Currently in Virginia, CNMs are required to enter a consultation agreement with a physician in order to practice. Twenty-Eight states allow independent practice for CNMs, and Virginia has one of the most restrictive environments. CNMs are well trained safe practitioners. Our work is deeply interconnected with the healthcare system as we work to bring care to women across the Commonwealth. It is time to remove the required consultation agreement as a condition for certified nurse-midwives to practice in Virginia.

Virginia scores 41/100 in Midwifery Integration. States with higher Midwifery Integration Scoring (MISS) for midwife integration, 100 being the best, have lower rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, cesarean birth, and neonatal mortality, and higher breastfeeding and spontaneous vaginal birth rates, even among Black women. **Integration means full practice and prescriptive authority for CNMs/CMs, equitable coverage by health plans including Medicaid, and easy referral and coordination with physicians and hospitals.**

CNMs and CMs should be able to practice to the full extent of their training and certification:

- CNMs and CMs are deemed “competent” prior to graduation or being allowed to take AMCB Certification Boards. Thus, “transition to practice” is not necessary.
- CNMs have been licensed since 1975 in Virginia and have a long history of safe, successful practice.

Consultation agreements reflect a standard of care that already exists in CNM/CM Standards of Practice, yet in a restrictive manner that has unintended consequences and barriers:

- In remote parts of the state, it is difficult to locate a physician able and/or willing to enter into a consultation agreement. Approximately 70 counties in Virginia do not have a CNM and 59 counties do not have an OB/GYN, and 6% of counties do not have a PCP.
- The local physicians are often in large group practices, complicating the ability for physicians to sign such agreements due to perceived medical liability or their medical practice policies.
- There is often a significant cost barrier attached to these agreements, resulting in restraint of trade for CNMs.
- Physicians often view CNMs as their competition rather than team-based care, disincentivizing such agreements.
- While the law may allow certified nurse-midwives to use telehealth, companies often will not contract with CNMs for services because they do not have independent practice. Many practices have had to utilize telehealth throughout COVID-19 and plan to continue to utilize it going forward.

About ACNM

ACNM represents certified nurse-midwives (CNM) and certified midwives (CM) in the US. CNMs and CMs are autonomous healthcare providers who practice within a health care system that allows for consultation, collaborative management, or referral as indicated by the health status of the woman or newborn, consistent with national standards for practice established by ACNM. CNMs and CMs are board certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board. CNMs have practice and prescriptive authority in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and are defined as primary care providers under federal law. CMs currently licensed to practice in 6 states. CNMs have been licensed in Virginia since 1975 jointly under the Boards of Nursing and Medicine and are classified as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).

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