



CORE COMPETENCIES FOR BASIC MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

The *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice* include the fundamental knowledge, skills, and behaviors expected of a new practitioner. Accordingly, they serve as guidelines for educators, students, health care professionals, consumers, employers, and policy makers and constitute the basic requisites for graduates of all nurse-midwifery and midwifery education programs accredited/preaccredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME), formerly the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) Division of Accreditation (DOA).

Midwifery practice is based on the *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice*, the *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*, the *Philosophy of the ACNM*, and the *Code of Ethics* promulgated by the ACNM. Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the ACNM or the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB), formerly the ACNM Certification Council, Inc. (ACC), assume responsibility and accountability for their practice as primary health care providers for women and newborns.

The scope of midwifery practice may be expanded beyond the core competencies to incorporate additional skills and procedures that improve care for women and their families. Following basic midwifery education, midwives may choose to expand their practice following the guidelines outlined in Standard VIII of the *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*.

Midwifery education is based on an understanding of health sciences theory and clinical preparation that shapes knowledge, judgment, and skills deemed necessary to provide primary health care management to women and newborns. Midwives provide health care that incorporates appropriate medical consultation, collaborative management, or referral. Each education program is encouraged to develop its own method of addressing health care issues beyond the scope of the current core competencies, and each graduate is responsible for complying with the laws of the jurisdiction where midwifery is practiced and the ACNM *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*.

ACNM defines the midwife's role in primary health care based on the Institute of Medicine's report, *Primary Care: America's Health Care in a New Era*,¹ the *Philosophy of the ACNM*,² and the ACNM position statement, "Midwives are Primary Care Providers and Leaders of Maternity Care Homes."³ Primary health care is the provision of integrated, accessible health care services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing the majority of health care needs, developing a sustained partnership with patients, and practicing within the context of family and community. As primary health care providers, CNMs and CMs assume responsibility for the provision of and referral to appropriate health care services, including prescribing, administering and dispensing of pharmacologic agents. The concepts, skills, and midwifery management processes identified

below form the foundation upon which practice guidelines and educational curricula are built. The core competencies are reviewed and revised regularly to incorporate changing trends in midwifery practice. This document must be adhered to in its entirety and applies to all settings for midwifery care, including hospitals, ambulatory care settings, birth centers, and homes.

I. Hallmarks of Midwifery

The art and science of midwifery are characterized by the following hallmarks:

- A. Recognition of menarche, pregnancy, birth, and menopause as normal physiologic and developmental processes
- B. Advocacy of non-intervention in normal processes in the absence of complications
- C. Incorporation of scientific evidence into clinical practice
- D. Promotion of woman- and family-centered care
- E. Empowerment of women as partners in health care
- F. Facilitation of healthy family and interpersonal relationships
- G. Promotion of continuity of care
- H. Health promotion, disease prevention, and health education
- I. Promotion of a public health care perspective
- J. Care to vulnerable populations
- K. Advocacy for informed choice, shared decision making, and the right to self-determination
- L. Integration of cultural humility
- M. Incorporation of evidence-based complementary and alternative therapies in education and practice
- N. Skillful communication, guidance, and counseling
- O. Therapeutic value of human presence
- P. Collaboration with other members of the interprofessional health care team

II. Components of Midwifery Care: Professional Responsibilities of CNMs and CMs

The professional responsibilities of CNMs and CMs include but are not limited to the following components:

- A. Promotion of the hallmarks of midwifery
- B. Knowledge of the history of midwifery
- C. Knowledge of the legal basis for practice
- D. Knowledge of national and international issues and trends in women's health and maternal/newborn care
- E. Support of legislation and policy initiatives that promote quality health care
- F. Knowledge of issues and trends in health care policy and systems
- G. Knowledge of information systems and other technologies to improve the quality and safety of health care
- H. Broad understanding of the bioethics related to the care of women, newborns, and families
- I. Practice in accordance with the ACNM Philosophy, Standards, and Code of Ethics
- J. Ability to evaluate, apply, interpret, and collaborate in research

- K. Participation in self-evaluation, peer review, lifelong learning, and other activities that ensure and validate quality practice
- L. Development of leadership skills
- M. Knowledge of licensure, clinical privileges, and credentialing

- N. Knowledge of practice management and finances
- O. Promotion of the profession of midwifery, including participation in the professional organization at the local and national level
- P. Support of the profession's growth through participation in midwifery education
- Q. Knowledge of the structure and function of ACNM

III. Components of Midwifery Care: Midwifery Management Process

The midwifery management process is used for all areas of clinical care and consists of the following steps:

- A. Investigate by obtaining all necessary data for the complete evaluation of the woman or newborn.
- B. Identify problems or diagnoses and health care needs based on correct interpretation of the subjective and objective data.
- C. Anticipate potential problems or diagnoses that may be expected based on the identified problems or diagnoses.
- D. Evaluate the need for immediate intervention and/or consultation, collaborative management, or referral with other health care team members as dictated by the condition of the woman, fetus, or newborn.
- E. In partnership with the woman, develop a comprehensive plan of care that is supported by a valid rationale, is based on the preceding steps, and includes therapeutics as indicated.
- F. Assume responsibility for the safe and efficient implementation of a plan of care that includes the provision of treatments and interventions as indicated.
- G. Evaluate the effectiveness of the care given, recycling appropriately through the management process for any aspect of care that has been ineffective.

IV. Components of Midwifery Care: Fundamentals

- A. Anatomy and physiology, including pathophysiology
- B. Normal growth and development
- C. Psychosocial, sexual, and behavioral development
- D. Basic epidemiology
- E. Nutrition
- F. Pharmacokinetics and pharmacotherapeutics
- G. Principles of individual and group health education
- H. Bioethics related to the care of women, newborns, and families
- I. Clinical genetics and genomics

V. Components of Midwifery Care of Women

Independently manages primary health screening, health promotion, and care of women from the peri-menarcheal period through the lifespan using the midwifery management process. While the woman's life is a continuum, midwifery care of women can be divided into primary, preconception, gynecologic, antepartum, intrapartum, and post-pregnancy care.

A. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities in primary care that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Nationally defined goals and objectives for health promotion and disease prevention
2. Parameters for assessment of physical, mental, and social health
3. Nationally defined screening and immunization recommendations to promote health and to detect and prevent disease
4. Management strategies and therapeutics to facilitate health and promote healthy behaviors
5. Identification of normal and deviations from normal in the following areas:
 - a. Cardiovascular and hematologic
 - b. Dermatologic
 - c. Endocrine
 - d. Eye, ear, nose, and throat
 - e. Gastrointestinal
 - f. Mental health
 - g. Musculoskeletal
 - h. Neurologic
 - i. Respiratory
 - j. Renal
6. Management strategies and therapeutics for the treatment of common health problems and deviations from normal of women, including infections, self-limited conditions, and mild and/or stable presentations of chronic conditions, utilizing consultation, collaboration, and/or referral to appropriate health care services as indicated.

B. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities in the preconception period that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Individual and family readiness for pregnancy, including physical, emotional, psychosocial, and sexual factors including
 - a. Non-modifiable factors such as family and genetic/genomic risk
 - b. Modifiable factors such as environmental and occupational factors, nutrition, medications, and maternal lifestyle
2. Health and laboratory screening
3. Fertility awareness, cycle charting, signs and symptoms of pregnancy, and pregnancy spacing

C. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities in gynecologic care that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Human sexuality, including biological sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, intimacy, and reproduction
2. Common screening tools and diagnostic tests
3. Common gynecologic and urogynecologic problems
4. All available contraceptive methods
5. Sexually transmitted infections including indicated partner evaluation, treatment, or referral
6. Counseling for sexual behaviors that promote health and prevent disease
7. Counseling, clinical interventions, and/or referral for unplanned or undesired pregnancies, sexual and gender concerns, and infertility
8. Identification of deviations from normal and appropriate interventions, including management of complications and emergencies utilizing consultation, collaboration, and/or referral as indicated

D. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities in the perimenopausal and postmenopausal periods that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Effects of menopause on physical, mental, and sexual health
2. Identification of deviations from normal
3. Counseling and education for health maintenance and promotion
4. Initiation or referral for age/risk appropriate periodic health screening
5. Management and therapeutics for alleviation of common discomforts

E. Applies knowledge, skills and abilities in the antepartum period that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Epidemiology of maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality
2. Confirmation and dating of pregnancy
3. Promotion of normal pregnancy using management strategies and therapeutics as indicated
4. Common discomforts of pregnancy
5. Influence of environmental, cultural and occupational factors, health habits, and maternal behaviors on pregnancy outcomes
6. Health risks, including but not limited to domestic violence, infections, and substance use/abuse
7. Emotional, psychosocial, and sexual changes during pregnancy
8. Anticipatory guidance related to birth, breastfeeding, parenthood, and change in the family constellation
9. Deviations from normal and appropriate interventions, including management of complications and emergencies
10. Placental physiology, embryology, fetal development, and indicators of fetal well-being

F. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities in the intrapartum period that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Confirmation and assessment of labor and its progress
2. Maternal and fetal status
3. Deviations from normal and appropriate interventions, including management of complications, abnormal intrapartum events, and emergencies
4. Facilitation of physiologic labor progress
5. Measures to support psychosocial needs during labor and birth
6. Labor pain and coping
7. Pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic strategies to facilitate maternal coping
8. Techniques for
 - a. administration of local anesthesia
 - b. spontaneous vaginal birth
 - c. third stage management
 - d. performance of episiotomy repair of episiotomy and 1st and 2nd degree lacerations

G. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities in the period following pregnancy that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Physical involution following pregnancy ending in spontaneous or induced abortion, preterm birth, or term birth
2. Management strategies and therapeutics to facilitate a healthy puerperium
3. Discomforts of the puerperium
4. Self-care
5. Psychosocial coping and healing following pregnancy
6. Readjustment of significant relationships and roles
7. Facilitation of the initiation, establishment, and continuation of lactation where indicated
8. Resumption of sexual activity, contraception, and pregnancy spacing
9. Deviations from normal and appropriate interventions including management of complications and emergencies

VI. Components of Midwifery Care of the Newborn

Independently manages the care of the newborn immediately after birth and continues to provide care to well newborns up to 28 days of life utilizing the midwifery management process and consultation, collaboration, and/or referral to appropriate health care services as indicated.

A. Applies knowledge, skills, and abilities to the newborn that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Effect of maternal and fetal history and risk factors on the newborn
2. Preparation and planning for birth based on ongoing assessment of maternal and fetal status
3. Methods to facilitate physiologic transition to extrauterine life that includes but is not limited to the following:

- a. Establishment of respiration
 - b. Cardiac and hematologic stabilization including cord clamping and cutting
 - c. Thermoregulation
 - d. Establishment of feeding and maintenance of normoglycemia
 - e. Bonding and attachment through prolonged contact with neonate.
 - f. Identification of deviations from normal and their management.
 - g. Emergency management including resuscitation, stabilization, and consultation and referral as needed
4. Evaluation of the newborn:
- a. Initial physical and behavioral assessment for term and preterm infants
 - b. Gestational age assessment
 - c. Ongoing assessment and management for term, well newborns during first 28 days
 - d. Identification of deviations from normal and consultation, and/or referral to appropriate health services as indicated
5. Develops a plan in conjunction with the woman and family for care of the newborn for the first 28 days of life, including nationally defined goals and objectives for health promotion and disease prevention:
- a. Teaching regarding normal behaviors and development to promote attachment
 - b. Feeding and weight gain including management of common breastfeeding problems
 - c. Normal daily care, interaction, and activity including sleep practice and creating a safe environment
 - d. Provision of preventative care that includes but is not limited to
 - (1) Therapeutics including eye ointment, vitamin K, and others as appropriate by local or national guidelines
 - (2) Testing and screening according to local and national guidelines
 - (3) Need for ongoing preventative health care with pediatric care providers
 - e. Safe integration of the newborn into the family and cultural unit
 - f. Appropriate interventions and referrals for abnormal conditions:
 - (1) Minor and severe congenital malformations
 - (2) Poor transition to extrauterine life
 - (3) Symptoms of infection
 - (4) Infants born to mothers with infections
 - (5) Postpartum depression and its effect on the newborn
 - (6) End-of-life care for stillbirth and conditions incompatible with life
 - g. Health education specific to the infant and woman's needs:
 - (1) Care of multiple children including siblings and multiple births
 - (2) Available community resources

REFERENCES

1. Donaldson MS, Yordy KD, Lohr KN, Vanselow NA, eds. *Primary Care: America's Health Care in a New Era*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1996.
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3. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Midwives are primary care providers and leaders of maternity care homes. Position statement. <http://www.midwife.org/ACNM/files/ACNMLibraryData/UPLOADFILENAME/000000000273/Primary%20Care%20Position%20Statement%20June%202012.pdf>. Published June 2012. Accessed December 17, 2012.

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