

NACPM Statement of Strategic Intent to Address Racism and Racial Disparities in Maternity Care in the U.S.

July 14, 2012

The mission of NACPM is to significantly increase access for all women to quality maternity care and the care of midwives by supporting the work and practice of CPMs.

We know that quality maternity care is presently not the norm for most women in the U.S. Our over-use of expensive technologies and underuse of many beneficial forms of care has resulted in the most expensive maternity care system in the world with relatively poor outcomes: our perinatal, infant and maternal mortality rates are worse than almost all other wealthy nations, and even worse than many poorer nations who spend far less than we do. Against this backdrop, the outcomes of mothers and babies of color are shockingly disparate. Black mothers are 4 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications than their white counterparts, and their babies are 2.5 times more likely to die in their first year of life. American Indians and Alaska Natives have an infant death rate 60 percent higher than the rate for whites. Although a key cause of these disparities may be unequal access to quality care, we recognize that societal and institutional racism, a system of power based on color, is the root cause.

Undoing societal and institutional racism in all its forms and eliminating maternity care disparities in our country is an enormous task. There can be no quick fixes. NACPM recognizes that we must make a commitment to doing work in our own sphere: that of strengthening our professional association of CPMs in service of improving the maternity care system in the U.S., and of supporting the work of other stakeholders within their spheres of influence and partnering with them to make a difference.

Towards this end, the Board of Directors and Staff of NACPM intend to work in the following ways to address institutional racism personally, in our profession and to work more effectively to eliminate racial disparities in the health of mothers and babies in the U.S:

1. We commit to addressing racism on an individual, board, and organizational level.
 - Each board and staff member commits to pursuing personal anti-racism training.
 - The board and staff commit to regular study-discussion together during board conference calls and in-face board meetings.
 - We acknowledge and appreciate the work of the *Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Work in Midwifery* group that emerged from the CPM Symposium 2012, and will encourage NACPM members to participate and access the anti-racism training resources this group provides at www.facebook.com/groups/150777878378439/
2. We desire and require the leadership of people of color as board members and advisors to the board in all aspects of the work of the organization.
 - Because of the urgency of including people of color in key leadership positions in NACPM, and in direct response to a request made by people of color at the CPM Symposium, the Board will immediately (Summer of 2012) expand the number of board members from 5 to 7 and seek out midwives of color to fill these positions by appointment for 2-year terms beginning in October 2012, after which they will be able to run for election to the Board if they choose.
 - The Board will reach out to experts for assistance in developing a multi-disciplinary *Advisory Group on Maternity Care Disparities* to advise the NACPM board and staff so that our professional association can work more effectively and partner with other groups and organizations to address racial disparities in maternity care.
3. We recognize that it is urgent to increase the number of midwives of color in the U.S. and that significant barriers to midwifery education exist for people of color. We commit to partnering with other organizations and individuals to address barriers and challenges and expand access to education.
4. We recognize cultural *sensitivity, versatility, and safety* to be core competencies in midwifery care and will support, influence, and align with the work of partner organizations to move forward in incorporating these requirements into midwifery education and practice standards.
5. We commit to the continuation of our policy work to expand access for all women to the care of CPMs, which at its heart addresses key components to equal access to care, and must include the leadership and expertise of people of color.