

CPMs: Midwifery Landscape and Future Directions

A set of briefing papers and recommendations from NACPM | OCTOBER 2017

Education and Accreditation

CPM Education

Education to become a CPM is competency-based regardless of route of study. Aspiring midwives become CPMs by attending and graduating from a MEAC-accredited school or by apprenticing with a qualified midwife and completing the Entry-Level Portfolio Evaluation Process (PEP) administered by NARM. Attendance at a non-MEAC-accredited school requires completion of the PEP. CPM training, regardless of route of education, requires a mastery of critical clinical skills necessary to competent midwifery care gained through direct experience with NARM-Registered Preceptors and other qualified maternity care professionals. The CPM is the only National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)-accredited midwifery credential that includes a requirement for training and experience in settings outside of the hospital. All students must sit for the NARM Written Examination to become a CPM, and students coming through non-MEAC-accredited programs must also take the NARM Skills Examination. Continuing education is required for recertification as a CPM. (For further detail, please see www.narm.org and the Credential and National Certification NACPM Briefing Paper.)

Changing Landscape

In 2014, the US MERA organizations acknowledged the value of accreditation of midwifery education by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (MEAC and ACME). They committed to support for state legislation requiring all new licensing applicants to successfully complete, by 2020, an education process accredited by MEAC or ACMN that qualifies students to take the NARM or AMCB national certification examination. In 2015, the organizations approved the Midwifery Bridge Certificate, administered by NARM, to meet new professional requirements in states with legislation requiring an accredited education by 2020 to allow currently-practicing CPMs to qualify to apply for licensure. (For further information, see www.usmera.org and the NACPM Briefing Paper Licensure and Regulation.)

All states (Alabama, Maine, Maryland, and South Dakota) that have established state licensure for CPMs since 2014, require MEAC-accredited education for new applicants and provide for bridging education for currently-practicing CPMs. New Jersey and Wyoming, where licensing was established prior to 2014, also require MEAC-accredited education. Several states where licensing was established prior to when the CPM credential was first issued in 1994 require formal education, including California, Florida, and Washington State. The majority of schools approved by these three states are now MEAC-accredited schools and programs.

The US MERA organizations also committed to supporting the development of MEAC- and/or ACME-accredited direct assessment midwifery training programs specifically to meet the needs for students wanting and needing the accessibility and affordability of the PEP but who are seeking an accredited education. A US MERA Task Force was established to support this goal. Several CPM educators are exploring direct assessment education for CPMs.

While CPMs have built an impressive network of schools and preceptorships, educational opportunities for aspiring midwives are limited, especially for people of color. Additional support is needed to increase the number of accredited programs and ensure there are more pathways which meet the needs of an ever-more diverse CPM workforce to serve an ever-more diverse childbearing population. NACPM is committed to supporting excellence and innovation in midwifery education, to supporting states to align new legislation with the US MERA agreements that includes MEAC-accredited education, and to investing in a strong and diverse workforce of CPMs.

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a process for establishing that educational institutions meet established criteria to ensure a basic level of quality. In the United States, accreditation is a non-governmental, self and peer evaluation process conducted by private educational associations. To be recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, accrediting agencies must operate per criteria

established in federal regulations. They must be governed by a board that includes practitioners, educators, and public members; set the criteria for evaluation with stakeholder input; and must conduct the evaluation process fairly and objectively.

What is the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council?

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC) is an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education that specializes in accrediting direct-entry midwifery educational programs that encompass the requirements for certification established by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) for Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) and essential competencies adopted by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), adapted to practice in the U.S.

The MEAC Board of Directors are the decision-makers regarding accreditation and pre-accreditation. Board members include professional midwives, midwifery educators, midwifery program administrators, consumers of midwifery education, consumers of midwifery care, and members of the public. They are elected by the members of MEAC, which are the institutions and programs accredited by MEAC. The accreditation process also involves volunteers who review the in-depth self-evaluation reports prepared by applicant programs and institutions and conduct site visits to verify the information submitted. Board members and other volunteers are supported in their work by a staff that includes an Executive Director and accreditation specialists.

By participating in the initial accreditation process and periodic re-accreditation reviews, schools establish their commitment to maintaining a program that meets standards set by the profession and being held accountable to students, the profession, their peers, and the public.

What are the benefits of MEAC accreditation for students?

Students benefit from MEAC accreditation because they can choose an educational pathway that meets their needs knowing that it has met national standards for midwifery education, will prepare them to become Certified Professional Midwives, and is held accountable by the profession. Most MEAC-accredited schools participate in federal financial aid programs so students have access to loans and/or grants.

To learn more about the importance of accreditation to midwifery students, see: youtu.be/2zBdyBNwmo

MEAC accreditation—

- » Serves a consumer protection purpose by providing assurance that the school or program has been evaluated and has met accepted standards established by and with the profession.
- » Assures prospective students that accredited education programs meet requirements established by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) for becoming a Certified Professional Midwife (CPM).
- » Assures students the school does what it promises on its website and promotional materials.
- » Ensures that the education the student receives is comprehensive and adequate for entry-level midwifery practice with instruction provided primarily by midwives.
- » Determines that a midwifery education program has set objectives for students who enroll, has provided services that enable these students to meet those objectives, and can, in fact, show that students have benefited from the learning experiences provided.
- » Assures students are taught by competent, qualified faculty.
- » Facilitates the process of becoming a CPM through NARM by streamlining the application process.
- » Allows students to participate in federally-funded financial aid programs at participating schools.
- » Assures students that the school continually undergoes quality-improvement process that incorporates self-evaluation and feedback from peers, including other midwifery educators and school administrators.
- » May facilitate recognition of transfer credits or degrees by another institution for further education or graduate education.
- » Enhances employment opportunities for graduates in states that base eligibility for licensure upon graduation from an accredited school or program or within midwifery practices that want assurance regarding the graduate's education.
- » Facilitates movement among states that require completion of a MEAC-accredited program as a qualification for licensure.

Why would a school want to become accredited by MEAC?

Schools seek accreditation for a variety of reasons. First, it's a way to demonstrate their credibility to potential students, midwives, preceptors, other institutions, and other health care professionals and policymakers. Second, the process of becoming or renewing accreditation is an opportunity for self-evaluation and peer evaluation using criteria established by the profession for curriculum, faculty, administration, and student services. Third, accreditation is required for participation in Federal financial aid programs. For midwifery educators creating programs within colleges or universities, MEAC accreditation sets parameters that must be met, e.g. midwives as instructors, and assures graduates will qualify to become CPMs.

Schools talk about the benefits here:
http://youtu.be/h2q3Ec_vSo4

MEAC accreditation—

- » Verifies that an institution or program meets established standards.
- » Enhances its national reputation and represents peer recognition.
- » Is an advocacy process that helps midwifery programs evaluate themselves according to their own goals.
- » Provides technical assistance to the applicant schools to achieve a high-quality program that meets MEAC standards.
- » Provides an opportunity for the school to receive feedback on program content, operation, and direction.
- » Provides communication to institutions about issues, changes, and updates within the midwifery community that affect accreditation standards and procedures.
- » Provides a reliable basis for inter- and intra-institutional cooperative practices, including admissions and transfer of credit.
- » Promotes ongoing self-evaluation and continuous improvement and provides an effective system for accountability.
- » Serves as a short- and long-term planning tool.
- » Aids staff, board, and administration in establishing priorities and developing action plans.
- » Offers a unique professional development opportunity for school staff and faculty to evaluate their own institutions or programs.
- » Is helpful to midwifery programs located within larger institutions that need support to maintain the necessary courses, qualified faculty, and adequate administrative and financial support.
- » Assists institutions in determining the acceptability of transfer credits.

- » Is a recruiting tool to attract faculty (course instructors and preceptors) and students.
- » Helps to identify institutions and programs for the investment of public and private funds.
- » Establishes one of several considerations used as a basis for determining eligibility for Federal student financial aid programs.

Why is accreditation good for the midwifery profession?

MEAC plays an essential role in the development and support of the profession by requiring educators to follow a path of continual growth and improvement in the delivery of midwifery education. This is achieved by supporting the development and accountability of high-quality educational programs built on evidence-based and current best-practice research. MEAC views accountability as a necessary and positive component of professional midwifery and embraces its role as accreditors in this process.

MEAC accreditation—

- » Advances the profession by promoting standards of practice and advocating rigorous preparation.
- » Provides assurance to existing midwifery practices that new midwives entering the group will be trained in the essential knowledge and skills needed to be a competent partner midwife.
- » Ensures consistency of skills among midwives.
- » Fosters accountability and, therefore, credibility.
- » Facilitates recognition of the profession by other health care professionals and policy-makers profession within health care profession.
- » Access to financial aid opportunities to increase the numbers of practicing midwives.
- » Acts as scaffolding for the next generation—helps the profession to come together to share resources and develop standards that strengthen instruction, improve clinical preceptorship experiences, build learning resources, require student support services, and more.

Why is accreditation good for the public?

Public policy-makers, including legislators and regulators, can rely on accreditation to establish that a program meets MEAC requirements for midwifery education, which are informed by the International Confederation of Midwives Global Standards for Education and prepare students to meet the requirements for national certification established by NARM. States save public dollars when they do not have to evaluate or oversee midwifery education programs within their states or others.

MEAC accreditation—

- » Promotes health, safety, and welfare by assuring that midwives are competent health professionals for the community.
- » Uses tax dollars wisely when it is used as a basis for determining eligibility for federally-funded programs and student financial aid.
- » Assures families that when they hire a midwife who graduated from a MEAC-accredited school, the midwife is ready to practice and provide competent care.

More Specifics about MEAC Accreditation

What types of programs and institutions are eligible for accreditation?

All direct-entry midwifery education programs in the United States are eligible to participate in the process of accreditation. MEAC has developed accreditation processes that honor a diversity of educational models including: structured apprenticeships, distance education, correspondence education, self-paced programs, programs within large institutions, free-standing schools or colleges, programs that result in certificates or degrees in midwifery.

What are the standards for MEAC accreditation?

Each institution or program accredited by MEAC has demonstrated it meets benchmarks associated with the following standards:

1. Measures student success with respect to the school's mission.
2. Bases its course of education on nationally recognized standards.
3. Utilizes qualified faculty for its didactic and clinical education.
4. Maintains appropriate facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources.
5. Practices sound financial management.
6. Provides appropriate student services.
7. Establishes policies and procedures regarding student affairs.
8. Includes minimum lengths of didactic and clinical education.
9. Has a mechanism for responding to complaints.
10. Is in compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act if it chooses to participate.

How does a program or institution become accredited?

Each program or institution must:

1. Prepare a comprehensive, detailed self-evaluation report that addresses each of the benchmarks in the MEAC standards.
2. Submit the self-evaluation report for review by a committee of peers and experts in midwifery education.
3. Open its doors to a thorough inspection to verify the accuracy and completeness of the report by the committee.
4. Provide any additional information requested if found to be missing or inadequate.
5. Once accredited, commit to maintain the quality of the program and notify MEAC if any substantive changes are planned.
6. Repeat the accreditation process every three to five years.

The applicant program or institution voluntarily elects to apply for accreditation and it voluntarily agrees to comply with all MEAC standards. The burden of proof in demonstrating compliance with standards rests with the institution or program, not with MEAC. The institution must demonstrate to MEAC that it meets or exceeds the standards. MEAC considers information about an applicant institution from any source in reaching its conclusions. All information submitted by the school or discovered in the review process is confidential.

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MEAC's Mission and Purpose

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council's mission is to promote excellence in midwifery education through accreditation. The purpose of MEAC is to establish standards for the education of competent midwives and to provide a process for self-evaluation and peer evaluation for diverse educational programs. MEAC is a non-profit organization approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

MEAC Philosophy Statement

As an accrediting body for direct-entry midwifery educational programs, the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council plays an essential role in the development and support of the profession by requiring educators to follow a path of continual growth and improvement in the delivery of midwifery education. This is achieved by supporting the development and accountability of high-quality educational programs built on evidence-based and current best-practice research. MEAC views accountability as a necessary and positive component of professional midwifery, and we embrace our role as accreditors in this process.

MEAC sets standards for midwifery education while encouraging heterogeneity in the educational models used and the individuals served. The tension between upholding objective standards and maintaining a rich variety of options for students is a challenge we gratefully accept.

We uphold the principles of inclusivity, non-discrimination, and diversity with regard to gender identity, race, marital status, ethnic origin, creed, age, sexual orientation, or disability in our board composition and in our support of varied educational models. MEAC standards for accreditation encourage broad student and faculty recruitment among our member schools.

MEAC values competency-based educational programs that train midwives to serve culturally, socially, and economically diverse women and families inclusive of gender identity, race, marital status, ethnic origin, creed, age, sexual orientation, and

disability. We believe the following to be integral to that goal:

- Mastery of core competencies is not defined by the length of time spent in the educational process but should meet an international standard of midwifery education.
- Mastery of core competencies can be accomplished through various educational routes including conventional classroom format, distance learning, and clinical placement.

We believe in the Midwives Model of Care™ as the form of care provided by midwives to their clients and as a standard for our work of accreditation. This value leads us to strive toward respectful, fair, individualized, responsive, and transparent interactions among those with whom we work.

We aspire to be a source of positive influence in healthcare by collaborating with midwifery and other professional organizations. We believe in the midwifery educator's ability to effect change in the maternity care system by making the Midwives Model of Care™ more accessible to all women through the training of skilled midwives and their integration as primary providers in women's health.

History of MEAC

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC) was formed in 1991 by the National Coalition of Midwifery Educators as a not-for-profit organization. MEAC's standards for accreditation were developed by expert midwifery educators from a variety of midwifery educational programs and pathways, including preceptors, in the United States. MEAC has been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education since 2000.

Memberships and Associations

MEAC maintains membership within the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) and the Academic Collaborative of Integrative Health (ACIH).