

Separating Midwifery

CLAIMS from REALITY

CLAIM - You need a nursing degree to be a good midwife.

REALITY - *FALSE*. Even the American College of Nurse Midwifery (ACNM) no longer supports that idea. Acknowledging that nursing and midwifery are two separate professions, the ACNM recognizes non-nurse (direct-entry) midwives.

CLAIM - Licensed midwives would need a mandatory collaborative agreement with a physician in order to be safe.

REALITY - *FALSE*. While the safe practice of midwifery includes referral to and consultation with physicians, a mandatory contractual agreement effectively shuts down homebirth practices, including some Illinois nurse-midwifery practices. In fact, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is opposed to such agreements. Although ACOG acknowledges a woman's right to make informed decisions regarding her delivery, they have officially turned their backs on the homebirth population, stating that "ACOG does not support programs or individuals that advocate for or who provide out-of-hospital births." In addition, the American College of Nurse-Midwives recognizes that "language that requires documentation of a specific relationship between physicians and midwives.....has resulted in decreased choice and limited access to care for women."

CLAIM - Giving birth at home is not safe.

REALITY - *FALSE*. The Coalition for Illinois Midwifery recognizes risks in birth, both at home and in the hospital. Evidence-based research demonstrates that these risks are equal for matched groups. In 2005, the British Medical Journal published the largest study ever of Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) care [BMJ 2005;330:1416 18 June]. This study included over 5000 births. It found that for low risk women, homebirth care with a CPM resulted in equal outcomes for infants and better outcomes for mothers, compared to a similar group in hospital care. The best way to assure maximum safety for home birth is to license midwives to protect the public from dangerous providers.

CLAIM - Homebirth midwives are recognized as an essential component of disaster preparedness planning and implementation.

FACT - *TRUE*. In the event of a flu pandemic or other disaster, in which hospitals may be inaccessible or unsafe, Certified Professional Midwives would be invaluable because of their unique skills to handle birth outside of the hospital and their ability to translate those skills to medical professionals who lack experience in that setting. Engaging CPMs in disaster planning is recommended by the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood. During the Katrina disaster CPMs were among the first responders.