



North Carolina Obstetrical & Gynecological Society

P.O. Box 27167 ♦ Raleigh, NC 27611

Tel: 919-833-3836 ♦ ncobgyn@ncmedsoc.org

FAQs on NCOGS Certified Nurse Midwife Policy

March 3, 2017

Will this policy change have an immediate impact on OB/Gyn practices, how doctors work with Certified Nurse Midwives or their patients?

No – today’s announcement will not have any immediate effect on any doctor or Certified Nurse Midwife or their patients. It is merely a change in the Society’s policy. The policy will guide the NC OB/Gyn Society’s discussions with policymakers and other stakeholders who may be interested in changing the current supervision law. If state law is changed to reflect this policy, the vast majority of doctors’ practices in our state will not be affected. Certified Nurse Midwives would experience a change in the process they go through to be licensed in North Carolina.

Why is this change in policy important?

Current law requires that Certified Nurse Midwives be supervised by an OB/Gyn to practice in North Carolina. The NC Ob/Gyn Society’s new policy acknowledges CNMs as independent medical practitioners – a top priority for CNMs in North Carolina and nationally. Rather than requiring CNM supervision by a physician, the NC OB/Gyn Society’s new policy recommends that CNMs be licensed as independent health care professionals and required to submit collaboration agreements with physicians as a condition of licensure. The NC OB/Gyn Society believes this policy will better reflect the working relationship between physicians and CNMs – one in which they work collaboratively, with each provider contributing his or her expertise to provide more comprehensive patient care. We want the policy to reflect the kind of consultation we see every day, in which a Certified Nurse Midwife seeks the advice or opinion of another health care professional. This change is also important because it will guide our policy work in the state legislature, where physician supervision is expected to be debated this year. Finally, we hope this position will lead to more cooperation with NC CNMs on issues of importance to both groups – such as Medicaid expansion and reimbursement, maternal mortality reduction and infant mortality reduction.

What are the important details of this new policy?

The new NC OB/Gyn Society’s policy recommends that a Certified Nurse Midwife submit a “physician collaboration agreement” when he or she applies for a license to practice independently in North Carolina. The NC OB/Gyn Society recommends that most of the details of the collaboration agreement be developed by the NC Joint Midwifery Board, which is made up of a majority of members who are nurses along with several OB/Gyn doctors. Under the new policy, the Midwifery Board would have the authority to approve

collaboration agreements that take into consideration a variety of variables, such as the area where the CNM practices, to ensure quality, safe care.

Under this policy, could a Certified Nurse Midwife open his or her own practice?

Under current law, CNMs can already open their own practices as long as they have a supervising physician. Under the new policy recommended by the NC OB/Gyn Society, Certified Nurse Midwives would retain this flexibility. While the Society anticipates that the Joint Midwifery Board would develop standards for the collaboration agreement, we do not believe it should require the presence of a physician at all times at the place where care is provided. Nor should the collaboration agreement be required to include the exact steps that a CNM must take on every condition, disease, or symptom. Rather, the NC OB/Gyn Society believes the collaboration agreement should specify which authorized procedures require the presence of the collaborating physician.

Do other states use the approach the NC OB/Gyn Society has endorsed?

Yes. According to a 2015 AMA survey, at least twelve states have some form of independent licensure for CNMs that also requires a collaboration agreement with a physician.

Does the new NC OB/Gyn Society position include any other recommendations to make this change in policy successful for Certified Nurse Midwives, physicians and patients?

Yes. The Society's new position recommends that a number of policies guide the collaboration between the CNM and the collaborating physician to ensure quality care and patient safety. More specifically, the Society recommends:

- A requirement that the collaborating physician also be the receiving physician in the event of a transfer of patient care from the CNM
- A requirement that the collaborating physician have a designated individual or group that provides coverage in the event the physician is not available
- A limit on the number of collaboration agreements in which a physician may participate
- A requirement that collaborating physicians have practice privileges at a facility offering the full scope of obstetrical services
- A requirement that the Joint Midwifery Board develop transfer of care protocols and require collaboration agreements to specify the conditions under which patient care is transferred from the CNM to the collaborating physician

Would Certified Nurse Midwives be allowed to prescribe medicine under this policy?

The NC OB/Gyn Society recommends that CNMs be authorized to prescribe medications and devices, including controlled substances, upon written delegation of authority from the collaborating physician. The collaborating physician would not be required to delegate authority to a CNM to prescribe Schedule II controlled substances under specified circumstances.

Would Certified Nurse Midwives be allowed to perform home births under this policy?

A Certified Nurse Midwife may currently perform home births legally in North Carolina as long as he or she has a supervising physician. If the policy recommended by the NC OB/Gyn Society is adopted, CNMs could provide home births as long as they have a collaboration agreement with a licensed OB/Gyn.

Does this policy affect “lay midwives”?

No. The NC OB/Gyn Society remains opposed to the licensure of lay midwives in North Carolina. The policy change approved by the Society’s Executive Committee concerns only the licensure of Certified Nurse Midwives.

For more information about this issue, please contact the North Carolina Obstetrical and Gynecological Society (NCOGS) at ncobgyn@ncmedsoc.org or (919) 833-3836.