

**American College of Nurse-Midwives
Leadership Competencies and Skills**



AMERICAN COLLEGE
of NURSE-MIDWIVES

INTRODUCTION

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) has long recognized the need for strong midwifery leadership to advance the profession and has leveraged this need into ongoing opportunities to develop leadership capability among its members. Beginning in 2015, ACNM has incorporated leadership development as one of the 5 core commitments that influence the work of the ACNM strategic plan across the organization. This decision was driven by the US maternity care landscape of unacceptably high maternal mortality, projected obstetric care provider shortages, and the fact that 30% of ACNM members identify as newly active midwives or midwifery students. Since then, ACNM has taken such steps as a midwifery leadership development conference with educational offerings for both early-career and seasoned professionals. ACNM also organized a Committee for Leadership Development within the volunteer leadership structure. However, ACNM also identified that developing leadership competencies unique to midwifery would be valuable to informing ongoing midwifery leadership development efforts.

In 2020, ACNM received funding from the Johnson and Johnson Foundation to identify and document these core personal leadership competencies for midwives in *Leadership Competencies and Skills for Midwives*. This document is intended to capture a wide swath of leadership expertise that may be required for certified nurse-midwives (CNMs)/certified midwives (CMs) to identify and successfully engage in leadership roles in a wide variety of areas, including clinical practice, health care administration, professional organizations, advocacy, education, and policy. Six competencies were identified, with specific skills articulated for each. The relative importance and relevancy of these competencies and skills may vary depending on a CNM/CM's specific role and the point at which a CNM/CM is in their career. Technical skills (eg, budgeting, quality improvement) are acknowledged but not specifically included as these tend to be role-specific and vary extensively across areas of leadership.

The document was developed for ACNM CNM, CM, and student members interested in understanding what competencies and skills may be necessary for building their leadership skills and considering how they might acquire these skills. As such, they may also be useful to

midwifery program directors and educators, health system leaders, and ACNM itself to help structure leadership programming.

The Leadership Competencies and Skills are not a comprehensive list. Rather, they are guidelines for acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities beyond the ACNM Basic Midwifery Core Competencies and midwifery practice according to the ACNM Code of Ethics. The Leadership Competencies and Skills build on and expand the knowledge, skills, and abilities delineated in the Basic Midwifery Core Competencies. Formal education in doctoral programs with competencies defined in the ACNM Competencies for Doctoral Education in Midwifery also exist and may be a path that some midwives choose to gain these skills, particularly the skills in the “Professional Expertise” competency. The content of Basic Midwifery Core Competencies and Competencies for Doctoral Education in Midwifery are constantly evolving; routine reevaluation of the Leadership Competencies and Skills will continue to consider how these documents complement each other and adapt the Leadership Competencies and Skills as necessary.

COMPETENCY 1: CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

The CNM/CM understands the past, present, and anticipated future of midwifery in the United States including current health systems operations and dynamic context and midwifery's specific role in, interactions with, and potential to impact this system.

Contextual Understanding Skills:

- Evaluate the history of midwifery in the United States and its impact on the current workforce and care models.
- Assess the history and function of the overall health system in the United States and its impact on population health.
- Demonstrate familiarity of the role of midwifery within the health system in the United States, including scopes of practice.
- Understand the public health domain of sexual and reproductive health and be able to apply a population approach to improving health.
- Summarize relationships and intersections among political, educational, and clinical domains of midwifery.
- Discover structures that perpetuate harm and employ strategies that promote well-being and equity for organizational members and the communities they serve.¹
- Maintain awareness of the internal and external environments affecting midwifery.¹

COMPETENCY 2: PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

The CNM/CM demonstrates expertise within their specific professional role and can leverage these skills to identify and engage in formal and informal leadership roles:

Professional Expertise Skills:

- Critically appraise existing research, policies, and other key documents, synthesizing information to impact health care process and outcomes.
- Demonstrate relevant professional skills necessary for specific leadership roles, including benchmarking, quality assurance, funding, risk management, advocacy, and/or health policy.
- Demonstrate project management skills to plan, execute, and oversee projects.

- Engage in continuous learning and education.

COMPETENCY 3: SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The CNM/CM integrates core skills necessary to continuously improve self-knowledge, interpersonal effectiveness, and well-being.

Self-Awareness and Self-Development Skills:

- Self-identify strengths and areas for growth.
- Practice vulnerability.
- Engage in self-reflection with an awareness of one's own strengths, weaknesses, and biases.¹
- Be able to receive and incorporate feedback.
- Practice resiliency.
- Identify personal values and sense of purpose.
- Establish practices that combat burnout.
- Take initiative to identify a problem and act on solutions.
- Use emotional intelligence and emotional quotient to build dynamic and resilient leaders.

COMPETENCY 4: COMMUNICATION AS A CHANGE AGENT

The CNM/CM understands the interprofessional and hierarchical interactions in which midwives routinely engage and can maximize these interactions through strong communication to convey meaning, build shared understanding, and productively move agendas forward.

Communication as a Change Agent Skills:

- Communicate effectively (written and spoken) with individuals and groups across professions and professional hierarchies.
- Develop and use formal and informal networks to create and maintain relationships.
- Disseminate evidence-based practice and research.
- Incorporate specific attributes essential to midwifery practice into communication.
- Identify and leverage relevant stakeholders.

- Give feedback across levels and professions.
- Address cultural perceptions of midwifery across the health system.

COMPETENCY 5: OPERATIONALIZATION AND EXECUTION

The CM/CNM applies operationalization and execution skills to translate visions and strategy into optimized performance and transformative outcomes.

Operationalization and Execution Skills:

- Incorporate a vision into practice through strategic planning.
- Translate policies and ideas into practice rapidly.
- Facilitate use and application of research evidence by multidisciplinary teams.
- Enforce professional boundaries and protect professional autonomy.
- Apply gender and racial equity lenses to evaluate situations and develop interventions.
- Establish and promote evidence-based standards.
- Form and lead teams toward shared visions and goals.
- Collaborate with other health care leaders in the deployment of systems that improve the standard of care for persons seeking midwifery care.¹

COMPETENCY 6: TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF MIDWIFERY

The CNM/CM demonstrates expertise in developing change processes, generating new knowledge, and supporting the development of new midwifery leaders to transform outcomes and the profession on a larger scale and in the long run.

Transforming the Future of Midwifery Skills:

- Generate knowledge on the effectiveness and role of midwifery in transforming patient outcomes.
- Innovate through the development of new solutions or adaptation of existing solutions.
- Garner and sustain commitments from stakeholders to changes in approaches, processes, and strategies.
- Conduct supervision, mentoring, and coaching of future midwifery leaders and allies.
- Develop succession plans and entry points for new leaders.

- Encourage an environment in which diversity in leadership will thrive.¹

REFERENCE

1. American College of Nurse-Midwives. Competencies for doctoral education in midwifery. 2021. Accessed October 6, 2022.
http://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/acnmldata/uploadfilename/000000000260/COMPETENCIES FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION_2021_Final.pdf

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