


Introducing: ACNM Diversification and Inclusion Task Force

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In August 2012, a group of ACNM representatives attended a diversity summit held by the Health Resources and Services Administration. The event drew firm connections between health care workforce diversity, health disparities, and the driving factors of social inequity; inspired members of ACNM's Midwives of Color Committee petitioned the Board of Directors to take concrete steps toward increasing diversity and inclusion within the midwifery profession and ACNM.

ACNM published an Issue Brief on Health Disparities in 2007 and a Position Statement on Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in 1999, both of which are available in the online ACNM Library at www.midwife.org/ACNM-Library. These documents recognize the impact of health inequities in the communities that midwives serve, as well as the importance of cultural humility in the delivery of quality health care. However, the connection between those issues and the diversity of our own organization has not yet been explored. Results from 2006-2008 surveys (see them at <http://1.usa.gov/14afsLz>) show that ACNM members are predominantly white and female, with an average age of 51 years. No further data on diversity of membership or of midwifery education programs has been published, nor has there been any recent data on perceptions of inclusivity.

The Diversification and Inclusion Task Force includes representatives from the Board of Directors; staff; every volunteer division; Midwives of Color, Nominating, and Program Committees; Directors of Midwifery of Education; Midwifery Business Network; and at-large members, including a midwifery student. The task force was charged to develop a diversification and inclusion strategy, and has determined board-endorsed definitions, goals, and objectives of the strategy. As we begin this journey, we look forward to continued communication with ACNM members regarding the status of the strategy, including open webinars and web space. Please stay tuned for more information! 

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The Diversification and Inclusion Taskforce has been charged to develop a strategy to recruit, retain, promote, and support the inclusion and advancement of persons of diverse backgrounds in the profession of midwifery. As we prepare to hire a consultant to assist in developing this strategy, we consider the goals we aim to achieve.

Definitions

Midwife or Midwifery. The use of midwife or midwifery in these documents refers to midwives as certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB). We acknowledge that midwifery is a profession rich in history, and it is practiced in the United States and around the world by midwives with a wide variety of educational backgrounds. These documents are created by and for certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) but may be adopted by others.

Diversity. Differences in identity that include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender and gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, religion, physical and intellectual ability, nationality, citizenship, age, learning style, mental health, professional background, midwifery certification, or degree. Diversity also refers to diversity of thought and perspective that come with individual identity. At a collective level, these dimensions of identity may correlate with inequity of social experience, including inequalities of privilege, opportunity and access to resources within the midwifery profession or in the pursuit of midwifery education.

Inclusion. Creating an environment that makes it possible and encourages all to fully participate. An inclusive environment promotes cultural humility, communication skills, and empathy. Inclusion is practical (ie, the ability to participate in a way that is congruous with one's identity and life circumstances) and emotional (ie, a sense of belonging, feeling respected and valued, and feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others to support the best work of all individuals).

Objectives

1. Identify current strategies that promote diversification and inclusion in ACNM, clinical settings, and education programs.
2. Identify challenges that impede diversity and inclusion in ACNM, clinical settings, and education programs.
3. Assess member perception of diversity and inclusion in midwifery and ACNM.
4. Develop learning opportunities around issues of diversity and inclusion for ACNM staff, the board and other leaders; develop Annual Meeting workshops with materials developed specifically for Directors of Midwifery Education (DOME) and the Midwifery Business Network (MBN).
5. Evaluate and update internal ACNM procedures impacting diversity, including those related to nomination/recruitment and retention; hiring and professional development; standards for classroom, clinical, and continuing education; and all formal documents and outreach materials.
6. Actualize a strategic process to address institutional barriers and ACNM culture by reviewing ACNM governance and policy.
7. Communicate with and motivate midwives to actively participate in diversification and promotion of inclusive environments.
8. Assist ACNM affiliates in their efforts to implement objectives related to diversity and inclusion.
9. Develop strategic partnerships with a diverse range of organizations to maximize recruitment and retention of a diverse population of midwives and to support their advancement.
10. Maintain ongoing evaluation and assessment of progress. 