
Role of CNMs, NPs, and PAs in Abortion Care

Read what professional organizations are saying about clinicians and choice. These statements and resolutions adopted by professional organizations show support for the increased role of appropriately trained certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), nurse practitioners (NPs), and physician assistants (PAs) in abortion care. For further information, contact cfc@prochoice.org.

** American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA)¹*

Policy Adopted by the AAPA House of Delegates, May 1992:

“The AAPA affirms a patient’s right of access to any legal medical treatment or procedure made with the advice and guidance of their health care provider and performed in a licensed hospital or appropriate medical facility.

“The AAPA supports the free exchange of information between the patient and provider and opposes any intrusion into the provider/patient relationship through restrictive informed consent laws, biased patient education or information, or restrictive government requirements of medical facilities.²

“The AAPA opposes attempts to restrict the availability of reproductive health care.”³

Deposition Statement in Defense of a Challenge to Montana’s “Physician-only” Abortion Law, (Doe v. Esch), 1993:

“The AAPA is committed to the principle that a physician assistant should be allowed to perform any medical task, including abortion, delegated by a physician under whose supervision the task will be performed.”

** American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)⁴*

Approved by the Board of Directors, February 3, 1991:

“The ACNM has adopted the following positions⁵:

- That every woman has the right to make reproductive choices;
- That every woman has the right to access to factual, unbiased information about reproductive choices, in order to make an informed decision; and
- That women with limited means should have access to financial resources for their reproductive choices.”

In 1971, the ACNM Board of Directors approved a statement that prohibited CNMs from performing abortions. Twenty years later, in 1991, the ACNM asked its membership whether it wanted to rescind this 1971 statement prohibiting members from performing abortions. Members voted to remove the prohibition. A resolution was approved at the ACNM Annual Meeting recommending that the Board of Directors rescind this statement, thereby allowing individual CNMs to utilize the guidelines for the

incorporation of new procedures into nurse-midwifery practice if he/she decides to provide abortions. The vote meant that individual CNMs now have the option to become involved in abortion service provision.^{6,7}

*American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)*⁸

Statement of ACOG Executive Board (January 1994):

“That to address the shortage of health care providers who perform abortions, the College encourages programs to train physicians and other licensed health care professionals to provide abortion services in collaborative settings.”

*American Medical Women’s Association (AMWA)*⁹

Position Statement on Abortion and Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Services, November 1999

“AMWA will work to increase the number of abortion providers by supporting initiatives to improve and increase training for medical students, residents, and physicians in the full range of abortion procedures, and to add adequately trained Nurse-Midwives, Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants to the pool of potential abortion providers.”

*American Public Health Association (APHA)*¹⁰

*Resolution 9917*¹¹:

1. “Supports the provision of first trimester surgical and medical abortion by appropriately trained NPs, CNMs, and PAs;
2. “Supports efforts to overcome legal and regulatory obstacles which limit the participation of NPs, CNMs, and PAs in abortion;
3. “Encourages NP, midwifery, and PA education and training programs to provide didactic and clinical training in abortion services, such as options counseling and pre- and post-abortion care, and in abortion techniques, for those who desire such training;
4. “Urges the inclusion of NPs, CNMs, and PAs in the labeling of medical abortion pharmaceuticals; and
5. “Urges health professionals to educate themselves, their colleagues, and the public about the skills of NPs, CNMs, and PAs and their competence to provide abortions.”

*Resolution 9117*¹²:

“Urges medical, nursing and public health schools, residency training programs, and midwifery and physician assistant programs to develop and incorporate materials on the medical need, procedures, and technology, as well as the history and public health aspects of abortion into current curricula.”

*Association of Physician Assistants in Obstetrics and Gynecology (APAOG)*¹³

Statement of the Association of Physician Assistants in Obstetrics and Gynecology, September 9, 1997:

“In 1992, the Board of Directors of the Association of Physician Assistants in Obstetrics and Gynecology (APAOG) voted to support the policies of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) regarding reproductive health.”

*International Confederation of Midwives (ICM)*¹⁴

Position Statement, 2002:

“The International Confederation of Midwives believes that a woman, who has had an abortion, whether spontaneous or induced, is entitled to receive midwifery care. In keeping with this belief, the midwife should:

- Consider such care to be within the role of the midwife
- Provide any immediate care necessary following abortion
- Appropriately refer the woman for any further treatment that may be required and that is beyond the scope of midwifery practice
- Provide the woman (and where appropriate her family) with education concerning the woman's future health, including family planning
- Recognize the emotional, psychological and social support which may be needed by the woman and respond appropriately.”

*National Abortion Federation (NAF)*¹⁵

In 1990 NAF and ACOG with the support of the Ford Foundation and the George Gund Foundation conducted a symposium, “Who Will Provide Abortions? Ensuring the Availability of Qualified Practitioners.” The symposium report found that “appropriately trained midlevel clinicians...offer considerable promise for expanding the pool of abortion providers” and recommended training for CNMs, NPs, and PAs.

* *National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)*¹⁶
(Formerly *National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Reproductive Health*)

Resolution on Nurse Practitioners as Abortion Providers, October 1991

“Whereas, the purpose of the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Reproductive Health is to ‘assure quality reproductive health services which guarantee reproductive freedom and to protect and promote the delivery of these services by nurse practitioners’;
“Let it be resolved that NANPRH believes that nurse practitioners, with appropriate preparation and medical collaboration, are qualified to perform abortions.”

*Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health (PRCH)*¹⁷

Policy Statement, May 1999:

“Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health® endorses the training of physicians, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives and physician assistants in the provision of abortion services.”

Footnotes

* These organizations have also endorsed the recommendations of NAF's 1997 symposium report, *Strategies for Expanding Abortion Access: The Role of Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and Nurse-Midwives in Providing Abortions*

References

1. Strategies for Expanding Abortion Access: The Role of Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and Nurse-Midwives in Providing Abortions. Symposium Report. Washington, DC: National Abortion Federation, 1997.
2. AAPA. Policy Adopted by the AAPA House of Delegates. May 1992, <http://www.aapa.org/>.
3. AAPA. Policy Adopted by the AAPA House of Delegates. May 1992, <http://www.aapa.org/manual/externalpolicy.pdf>.
4. Supra n. 1.
5. ACNM. ACNM Board of Directors Resolution. February 3, 1991.
6. Summers L. "The Genesis of the ACNM 1971 Statement on Abortion." J Nurse-Midwifery, May/June 1992, 37(3): 168-174.
7. Thompson JE. "1992 Abortion Statement Vote." Quickening, July/August 1992; 23.
8. Supra n. 1.
9. AMWA. "AMWA's Position Statement on Abortion and Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Services." Position Statement adopted by the House of Delegates, November 1999. <http://www.amwa-doc.org/index.cfm?objectid=0A5FBB23-D567-0B25-530D43B3A7BA6627>.
10. Supra n. 1.
11. APHA. "9917: Advocating for Nurse Practitioners, Nurse-Midwives, and Physician Assistants as Abortion Providers." Policy Statement Adopted by the Governing Council, November 10, 1999. <http://www.apha.org/legislative/policy/99policy.PDF>.
12. APHA. "9117: Access to Abortion Ensuring the Availability of Qualified Practitioners." Policy Statement, 1991.
13. Supra n. 1.
14. ACNM. "Care of Women Post Abortion." Position Statement, 2002. <http://www.internationalmidwives.org/Statements/Care%20of%20women%20post%20abortion.pdf>
15. Who Will Provide Abortions?: Ensuring the Availability of Qualified Practitioners. Symposium Report. National Abortion Federation and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 1991.
16. Supra n. 1.
17. PRCH. "Abortion Training for Advanced Practice Clinicians." Policy Statements, May 1999. http://prch.org/advocacy_policy/position.shtml#clinicians.

For More Information

For referrals to abortion providers who offer quality care, call NAF's toll-free hotline: 1-800-772-9100.
Weekdays: 7:00A.M. - 10:00P.M. EST Saturdays: 8:00A.M. - 5:00P.M. EST Sundays: 9:00A.M.-5:00P.M.

Clinicians for Choice (CFC) is a membership organization affiliated with the National Abortion Federation (NAF), representing pro-choice certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), nurse practitioners (NPs), and physician assistants (PAs) working to increase access to comprehensive reproductive health care.

National Abortion Federation

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