

What is a Midwife?

Most midwives in the United States are health care providers who offer services to women of all ages and stages of life. With their advanced education and their focus on research and partnering with women, they are among the most modern, forward-thinking health providers in the United States today.

The midwifery approach to health care has never been more important. Today's woman expects the best care. She expects her provider to understand and value her individual needs. She wants a provider who will partner with her to make health decisions.

Midwives focus on what is most important to each woman's unique situation and values and often work with other members of the health care team. It's time to think about whether a midwife might be the right choice for you.

Midwifery Practice

When considering a health care provider who will best meet your needs, keep in mind that many midwives focus not only on [maternity care](#), but also on the [full range of health needs throughout life](#). Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) provide care from your first period until after menopause, plus all the important health events in between, such as:

- [General health care services](#)
- [Annual gynecologic exams](#)
- [Family planning needs](#)
- [Treatment of sexually transmitted infections](#)
- [Care during teenage years](#)
- [Care for pregnancy, labor, and birth](#)
- [Menopause care](#)

CNMs and CMs are independent health care providers. They also work with other members of the health care team, such as physicians and nurses, to provide the highest quality care. They work in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, medical offices, clinics, birth centers, and homes. They provide general health care services, gynecology care, and family planning, as well as maternity care (before, during, and after childbirth). They are covered by most insurances.

Types of Midwives

Midwives are dedicated to providing you with the personalized health care experience you deserve. When looking for a midwife who will best meet your needs, it is important to understand the different options available to you in the United States.

**Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM®)*

CNMs are registered nurses with graduate education in midwifery. They have graduated from a nurse-midwifery education program accredited by the [Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education \(ACME\)](#). This education includes a university degree as well as hands-on clinical training by practicing CNMs. They also have passed the national certification exam of the [American Midwifery Certification Board \(AMCB\)](#). CNMs provide general women's health care throughout a woman's lifespan. These services include general health check-ups and physical exams; pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care; well woman gynecologic care; and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. CNMs are able to prescribe a full range of substances, medications, and treatments, including pain control medications. CNMs work in many different settings, such as hospitals, health centers, private practices, birth centers, and homes. Most midwives in the United States are CNMs. All Midwives at Valley View Hospital are *Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs®)* with their Master's Degree.

Certified Midwife (CM®)

CMs are midwives with a bachelor's degree in a field other than nursing who have graduated from a graduate-level midwifery education program accredited by ACME. The midwifery education program for CMs includes health-related skills and training in addition to midwifery education, which is the same as that of CNMs. Like CNMs, they have passed the national certification exam of the AMCB. CMs provide the same services as CNMs, practice in the same settings, and receive the same preparation as CNMs to safely prescribe a full range of substances, medications, and treatments, including pain control medications.

Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)

CPMs prepare for a national certification exam administered by the [North American Registry of Midwives \(NARM\)](#) in different ways. There are two primary pathways for CPM education with differing requirements: apprenticeship training alone or an accredited formal education program. The health care services provided by CPMs are not as broad as those of CNMs and CMs. CPMs provide pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care for women outside of the hospital—often in birth centers and homes. CPMs are not able to prescribe most medications.

Other Midwives

Other midwives who are not certified by AMCB or NARM may be practicing in some states. These midwives may or may not have formal education and have not passed a national certification exam. They may or may not be licensed. Their services are usually focused on pregnancy and birth, and they are unable to prescribe most medications.