

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

United States Midwifery Education Regulation and Association

(US MERA) Work Group

A Collaboration of:

North American Registry of Midwives (NARM)

National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM)

Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA)

Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC)

American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)

American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)

Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME)

US MERA is setting forth this memorandum of understanding for a five-year period from May 5, 2015 to May 4, 2020 with option to renew between the organizations stated herein. *Procedures that are required to support implementation of the understandings in this MOU may be found in the US MERA Operating Guide*

I. GOAL OF THE MOU

- A. To strengthen the work of US MERA by establishing the US MERA Working Group (WG) as a collaboration of the organizations stated herein, and codify a joint understanding for future activities.
- B. To define roles, relationships and resources:
 - 1. Collaboration within the US MERA WG, the US MERA Steering Committee (SC), and other committees and task forces.
 - 2. For communication between WG , individual organizations members, other organization members and to the public, and,
- C. To enhance trust, build relationships, and assure inter-organizational transparency that will be key to the successful achievement of our goals.
- D. To define and agree to a consensus and decision-making processes in order to institutionalize equity, transparency and clear processes

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. *US MERA*: a group that is a collaboration of the national United States midwifery organizations stated herein that represent education, regulation/certification, and professional association for midwifery.
- B. *US MERA Annual Meeting*: An annual face to face meeting where representatives of the member organizations of the US MERA work together toward achievement of identified mutually agreed upon goals. Written minutes will be taken at the annual meeting and, following approval by the SC will be made available to the organizational BODs.
- C. *US MERA Work Group (WG)*: A group of five representatives from each of the member organizations who attend the Annual Meeting, who review and discuss proposals brought forward by the SC, and engage in setting the direction and planning for the work of US MERA toward achievement of identified mutually agreed on purpose, mission and goals.
- D. *US MERA Steering Committee (SC)*: One representative and one alternate from each organization that, provide the WG, committees, and task forces with operational leadership in carrying out the goals set forth by US MERA. Attendance at the annual meeting as a member of the work group is required of the Steering Committee members.
- E. *Standing Committees and Task Forces*

1. Standing Committees include members of the WG and other members of the organizations stated herein that work on ongoing specific scopes of activities.
 2. Task forces include members of the WG and other members of the organizations stated herein, that work to achieve a set task or goal for a limited period of time.
 3. A task force or standing committee may from time to time invite consultants and experts to contribute to the work of the committee or task force.
- E. A glossary of additional definitions can be found in the Operating Guide and Committee Standing Rules and Operating Procedures (SROP)s.

III. VISION OF US MERA

The vision of US MERA is to make a positive impact on US maternity care in all 50 states, and all territories that will improve the health of all women and their families in the United States by setting standards for midwifery education leading to entry-level certification for all midwives and supporting legislation leading to regulation that incorporates these standards.

IV. MISSION OF US MERA

The mission of US MERA is to elevate and grow the profession of midwifery in all 50 states, and all territories and commonwealths by applying the ICM Standards to the education and practice of midwifery through collaboration and support of professional associations concerned with these issues in the United States.

V. PURPOSE OF US MERA

US MERA operates in a spirit of trust and cooperation. The purpose of US MERA is to:

- A. Create a shared vision for United States (US) midwifery within a global context by aligning with the three Pillars of the ICM Global Standards
- B. Generate an action plan for collaboration to strengthen and promote the profession of midwifery in the US
- C. Make a positive impact on US maternity care that will improve the health of all women and their families and promote normal physiologic birth.

VI. CORE VALUES

- A. ***Mutual value and respect for all members.*** We believe the opinion and perspective of every member is essential to consider by making the time and space for sufficient open discussions.
- B. ***Seek to find the “third way”.*** We believe there is always another option and that our approach is to remain in the conversation, listening actively to each other, until we find the opportunity for moving forward productively together.

- C. ***Seek consensus.*** We believe that as an agent of change, we are best positioned to achieve change by taking the time to build collective, shared agreement on decisions.
- D. ***Be a socially just organization.*** We believe in the principles of access, protocols (processes) and transparency. To engage us in fair and equitable decision-making.

VII. **BACKGROUND OF US MERA**

A. *Global Vision*

1. The organizations stated herein representing midwifery education, regulation/certification, and association in the United States began meeting together in October 2011.
2. The purpose was to explore a way to respond jointly to the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) Global Standards for midwifery that were issued in 2010. These standards cover midwifery education, regulation, essential core competencies, and guidelines for strengthening midwifery professional associations, which were endorsed by the ICM Council in June 2011, and have been revised in 2013.
3. The ICM Council endorsed three pillars of a strong midwifery profession:
 - a) Education to provide a highly competent, qualified workforce
 - b) Regulation of the activities of the professionals
 - c) Association, organization of members to promote the profession

B. *US MERA Future Vision*

1. The original US MERA WG formed as a means for the organizations stated herein to work toward achievement of identified mutual goals that are guided by the ICM standards for education, regulation and association in order to promote a highly competent, qualified workforce in the United States. The WG included five allocated seats from each organization for a total of 35 founding members. Historically, these organizations had differences that prevented goal achievement. The decision to proactively build a working relationship through a collaboration that represents the organizations stated herein is a landmark in the history of US midwifery.
2. In 2012, through funding from the Transforming Birth Fund, the group selected Managance Consulting & Coaching as a facilitator to guide the group's discussions. The group has held four joint multi-day meetings since its inception.
3. In 2014, it was agreed to clarify our work together by establishing a formal collaboration through this MOU that envisions and works toward a more cohesive US midwifery presence inspired and informed by global midwifery standards and competencies adopted by the ICM in 2011. US MERA aims to accomplish the following:

- a) Develop an initial set of creative, resilient brave solutions to reach consensus on challenging issues.
- b) Develop a single shared US response to the ICM global standards for education, regulation and association that creates a platform for future collaboration among US midwifery organizations.
- c) Develop a US MERA Operating Guide to specify shared practices for consistency in the ways the group works together and address sustainability in terms of participation and financial support.

VIII. US Midwifery and the ICM Global Standards

The ICM Pillars (education, regulation and association) form the core focus for the collaboration. The interrelationship between accreditation, midwifery education and certification, form the basis for regulation of midwifery in the United States. Certification is the bridge between educational attainment of the essential competencies and regulation.

A. *Education*

1. Accrediting bodies: There are two accrediting bodies for midwifery education in the US that are recognized by the US Department of Education: MEAC that accredits programs for the Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) and ACME that accredits programs for the Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM) and Certified Midwife (CM).
2. CNM/CM educational pathways
There is one educational pathway to obtain certification as a CNM or CM. All candidates for CNM or CM must obtain a graduate degree, complete an ACME accredited midwifery education program and successfully pass the AMCB certification examination.
3. CPM educational pathways
There are three educational pathways to obtain certification as a CPM
 - a) Direct entry through a portfolio evaluation process
 - b) Graduation from a MEAC-accredited program
 - c) Certification as a CNM or CM

B. *Certification/Regulation*

1. A key commonality between CNM/CMs and CPMs is that both have similar certification processes through AMCB and NARM with processes that are accredited by same body, The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).
2. NCCA assures standardized practices for examination development and organizational oversight. Additionally, at the April 2014 meeting, it became clear that the history of the development of the certification processes were following similar paths. Certification in the United States is a different process when compared to the national registration, which combines the functions of certification and licensure, that occurs in many other ICM member countries
3. Although the pathways to certification are different between NARM and AMCB, the WG agreed that by 2020, a task force of US MERA will develop a mechanism for direct assessment education that can be accredited by the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC), the American Commission on Midwifery Education (ACME), or another accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education. The purpose of this agreement is to meet or exceeds the educational standards set forth by ICM.

C. *Professional Associations*

1. ICM notes that the organization of members into a strong association represents the third pillar of a strong midwifery profession. There are three midwifery associations that are members of US MERA.
 - a) ACNM
 - b) MANA
 - c) NACPM
2. All participating associations share the vision of the core responsibilities of a professional association including:
 - a) Being a visible entity as a voice and focal point for the profession
 - b) Represent legal and regulatory issues of the profession and provide professional support
 - c) Provide leadership and set standards
 - d) Contribute to policy development and lobby for legislation necessary for the profession
3. Each association has used the ICM Member Association Capacity Assessment Tool (MACAT) as a framework to help assess and decide essential activities for growth and development. The MACAT assesses how the association meets its core responsibilities.

IX. PARTICIPANTS

US MERA is a partnership that includes representatives from the organizations stated herein, representing the three pillars of the ICM global standards for midwifery education and practice and the role of certification in the United States.

A. *Education/Accreditation*

1. Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME)
2. Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC)

B. *Certification/Regulation*

1. American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)
2. North American Registry of Midwives (NARM)

C. *Professional Associations*

1. American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)
2. Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA)
3. National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM)

X. UNDERSTANDING

The parties acknowledge and agree to the following:

A. US MERA is a collaboration that serves as an “organization of organizations”, that has its own vision, mission, core values, purpose, goals and activities.

1. US MERA may issue independent statements about its activities.
2. Statements issued by US MERA do not serve as the voice of an individual organization but represents US MERA as a whole.
3. US MERA is working to develop mechanisms and funding streams that will sustain the US MERA collaboration.
4. Implementation of this MOU will be guided by the Operating Guide

B. **Decision Making Process**

The primary decision making process will be a Consensus Model, unless another model is agreed upon in advance. A consensus model has two parts:

1. A consensus process is a set of steps to generate as much agreement as possible that is in everyone’s best interest. In these steps there is discussion to seek understanding as well as idea sharing and brainstorming to develop alternative proposals toward reaching shared agreement.
2. Consensus decision-making is the step of confirming agreement of a proposal that everyone in the group has contributed to developing. Consensus decision-making is guided by decision rules (i.e. decision-making criteria) that determine if the consensus process generated the degree of agreement necessary for a formal decision.

3. Details can be found in The Operating Guide.

C. WG Representation

The representatives to the WG, who attend the Annual Meeting, are appointed by their respective BODs, and are charged with communicating the activities, deliberations, and proposals of US MERA back to their BODs, and to represent the views of their organization. Each organization has up to five member seats, and two observer seats on the WG who attend the Annual Meeting.

1. The representatives who attend must be supportive of the vision, mission, core values, purpose, and goals of US MERA and will represent the organization that has selected them.
2. The representatives who attend must be apprised of issues and activities that are ongoing at US MERA.
3. The observers may attend the meeting but do will not participate in discussions or decision-making. Any WG member may request that a portion of the meeting be closed to observers.
4. Each organization may “designate” up to two seats to other US MERA or other midwifery-related organizations for participation in the Annual Meeting as part of the WG or as an observer, to promote inclusion of other views.
 - a) If an organization wishes to fill a designated seat with a representative of a midwifery organization that is not part of this MOU, the organization must request approval of all other US MERA organizations stated herein.
 - b) If an organization wishes to fill a designated seat with a representative who is not a member of their organization, they must request approval from all US MERA organizations stated herein.
 - c) Each organization is responsible for the costs of attendance for representatives they designate to attend annual meetings, regardless of whether the seat is one of those allocated to them, or is a donated seat.

D. The Steering Committee (SC)

1. The SC carries out the mission and guides the day-to-day activities of US MERA.
2. Each organization has one seat and one alternate seat appointed to represent their organization on the SC. Appointments and the roles of the SC member and alternate will be made in alignment with procedures in the Operating Guide.
3. The SC may at any time invite consultants, outside stakeholders and facilitators who provide guidance and coaching to support US MERA activities.
4. The role of the SC is to generate proposals, and/or receive and discuss input from the committees and task forces.

5. The SC presents proposals to the member organizations BODs and carries each BOD recommendation forward in accordance with the consensus decision-making model. The SC then acts upon the final proposal.
6. At SC meetings, each organization has one voice for agreement.
7. No substitutions will be made on SC calls if the designated representative/alternate cannot be present.
8. Written minutes will be taken at each SC meeting and, following approval by the SC will be made available to the organizational BODs.

E. Addition of New Membership Organizations to US MERA

1. *Application Criteria*

In the future, as US MERA grows and develops, there may be reason to include other organizations in the WG. An organization may apply to become a member under the following conditions:

- a) Applications will be accepted for consideration throughout the year.
- b) The organization agrees to actively pursue activities in support of the ICM Standards and Competencies and can demonstrate commitment in writing to the ICM Pillars of Midwifery Education, Regulation and Association
- b) The organization has a mission, purpose and goals that is consistent with the mission, purpose and goals of US MERA
- c) The organization agrees to abide by all terms of this MOU.
- d) The organization fits one of the following categories:
 - i. Recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE)
 - ii. Accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)
 - iii. A member of ICM or has completed the ICM Member Association Capacity Assessment Tool (MACAT)

2. *Application Procedures*

- a) An organization completes the US MERA application and either shows proof of USDE, NCCA recognition/accreditation, ICM membership or completes the ICM Member MACAT tool for Associations and submits those to the SC
- b) Upon receipt of application package, the SC shall consider the request and decide whether the application meets the criteria stated above.
- c) The SC will then make a recommendation to the organizational BODs of the US MERA member organizations to accept or decline the application based upon the criteria.
- d) The SC carries the organizational BODs recommendations forward and acts upon the application in accordance with the consensus decision-making model.

- e) In the event that an organization does not meet the criteria, they will be notified by the SC with details of deficiencies, and may reapply in the future after the deficiencies have been addressed.

F. Termination of Membership

A member organization of US MERA may be terminated at any time for failure to continue to meet the criteria of membership

1. Questions or concerns about the failure to continue to meet the criteria for membership must be discussed and considered at an SC meeting.
2. The organization under discussion will be notified and given every opportunity to attend the SC meeting.
3. If the criteria are found not to be met, the SC will then make a recommendation to the organizational BODs of the US MERA member organizations to terminate membership.
4. The SC carries the organizational BODs recommendations forward and acts upon the recommendation to terminate membership in accordance with the consensus decision-making model as described in the operating guide.
5. In the event that a member organization is terminated, it will be notified with details of deficiencies, and may reapply in the future after the deficiencies have been addressed.

G. Voluntary Withdrawal of Membership

Member organizations may voluntarily withdraw for any reason and may reapply in the future. The process for withdrawal is described in the Operating Guide.

H. Communication

All members of US MERA agree that the content of communications about US MERA to any constituents including but not limited to, their membership, the public, or other organizations, regarding activities or agreements developed by or related to the US MERA WG, including the SC, must be developed and released collaboratively.

I. *Committee Structure and Function*

1. Committees may be formed by the SC for the purpose of accomplishing the specific work of US MERA, and can include both standing committees and task forces. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Communications Committee
 - b) Infrastructure Committee
 - c) On-Ramp Committee

- d) Delphi Task Force
- e) Direct Assessment Task Force
- 2. Committees will share information and make recommendations to the SC.
- 3. It is expected that all organizations stated herein will have active members on at least one US MERA committee
- 4. All committees should operate within the mission and vision of US MERA. Each committee will be responsible for establishing its own Standing Rules of Procedure (SROP) that will be approved by the SC. The SROP for each committee should address at a minimum the following items:
 - a) Member Composition
 - b) Tenure of Member Appointments
 - c) Scope of Work
 - d) Meeting Schedule
- 5. The SC will review existing committees and task forces and evaluate their need to continue annually
- 6. An advisory council or other group(s) may be recommended by the SC.

XI. AGREEMENT

A. *Fiscal Responsibility*

- 1. Each organization stated herein is responsible for costs associated with sending organizational representatives to in-person meetings.
- 2. Each organization stated herein will share in costs associated with facilitation and other meeting expenses.
- 3. As US MERA further develops, financial and other guidelines will be created as needed to provide policies and procedures for the US MERA collaboration. These policies and procedures will be maintained in the Operating Guide.
- 4. The ACNM Foundation will serve as the fiscal agent until such time as the Foundation and US MERA decides otherwise.
- 5. The fiscal agent will submit a financial report to the SC on an annual basis.
- B. It is expressly agreed that this written MOU embodies the entire agreement of the US MERA parties and no other agreements exist between the parties regarding this subject matter except as herein provided. Any changes or modifications to this agreement must be in writing and be signed by all parties.
- C. Signing of this MOU does not constitute any legal rights or legal obligations other than the obligation by all parties to negotiate in good faith on the objectives of the memorandum.
- D. This document is hereby entered into on this 5th day of May, 2015. By signing below, each signatory affirms that she/he has the authority to bind their respective organizations. The terms of this agreement will be reviewed by the SC at least annually, will commence

as of the date signed by all the parties, and will continue for a period of five (5) years or until terminated by consensus of all the parties. Intent to terminate by any one party will require that written notification be sent by registered mail to the member organization addresses that are on record thirty (30) days prior to a SC meeting to discuss and reach consensus regarding termination.

Organization (Alphabetically)	Signatory	Date
American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)		
Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME)		
American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)		
Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA)		
Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC)		
National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM)		
North American Registry of Midwives (NARM)		