US MERA

2015 Annual Meeting Report

North American
Registry of Midwives

ACME Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education

The US Midwifery Education, Regulation, and Association (US MERA) convened for the third annual meeting of the collaboration on April 25-27, 2015, at the Bolger Center in Potomac, Maryland. Representatives of the member organizations came together to continue our mutual work to advance the vision of expanding access to high-quality midwifery care and physiologic birth for all women in all birth settings in the United States, and to clarify and build on the historic accomplishments and agreements of the 2013 and 2014 US MERA Annual Meetings.

US MERA is a coalition comprised of representatives of national midwifery associations, credentialing bodies and education accreditation agencies: Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME), American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB), Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC), Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA), National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM), and North American Registry of Midwives (NARM). Motivated by the needs of childbearing women around the country, these organizations have been working together for nearly four years to find essential common ground, envisioning and working toward a more cohesive United States midwifery presence. We are inspired by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) vision and promise of a strong and autonomous midwifery workforce around the globe, and we are informed by the global midwifery standards and competencies adopted by the ICM in 2011.

In addition to the on-going leadership of the US MERA Steering Committee, significant work was accomplished over the past year by several committees established after the 2014 annual meeting: Infrastructure Development; Communications; Legislation; Education; and Professional Regulation. The work of these committees over the past year informed and supported the accomplishments of the 2015 annual meeting.

Accomplishments of the 2015 US MERA Annual Meeting include:

1. Continued building of relationships and leadership practices needed to sustain an evolving pioneering collaboration, including learning and practicing consensus building and decision-making

2. Approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), developed by the Infrastructure Development Committee:

- to formalize collaborative relationships among the US MERA organizations and to establish consistent practices for sustaining our work together
- includes a consensus building and decision-making process
- includes an application packet, aligned with ICM standards, to provide a process for other organizations to apply to become members of the US MERA coalition

3. Approval of the concept of a Midwifery Bridge Certificate, developed by the Professional Regulation Committee, to be issued by NARM, for currently practicing Certified Professional Midwives (CPM) to meet new professional regulation requirements in states with legislation requiring an accredited education by 2020, to allow these currently practicing CPMs to qualify to apply for licensure. (Please see addendum to this report: Midwifery Bridge Certificate)

4. Approval of the creation of an Equity Task Force to develop guidance for US MERA for addressing equity within the collaboration

5. Presentation of the work of the US MERA committees:

- Communications Committee:
  - Plan for a US MERA website to go live Summer 2015
  - Raised $1850 from US MERA member organizations to pay for the website
  - Plan the development of tools, such as collaborative webinars and PowerPoint presentations, to communicate about the work of US MERA with various audiences

- Legislative Committee: Holly Powell Kennedy provided the group with an explanation about what a Delphi Process is and how US MERA is using it to develop consensus principles for midwifery regulation to be offered to states as guidance in the development new legislation for midwifery licensure, anticipated to be completed in July 2015.[1]

- Education Committee:
  - Following the April 2014 US MERA Annual Meeting, this committee formed a Task Force to leverage innovations in higher education, specifically the Direct Assessment Competency-Based model[2], to expand access to and affordability of midwifery education
  - Secured $20,000 Transforming Birth Fund grant for facilitation
  - Hired Charla Long, JD, a national direct assessment expert to convene a meeting in summer, 2015, of the Task Force and others, to develop a model for applying direct assessment to midwifery education

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[1] A Delphi process is a method for structuring a group communication process that is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to achieve consensus with a complex problem. It involves a series of rounds of collecting information about a topic from participants, which is analyzed and fed back to participants for further rounds of information collection and analysis. It provides an opportunity for individuals to revise their judgments based on this feedback and for anonymity for individual participants.

[2] Instead of awarding credits based on the completion of courses and how much time students spend learning, the direct assessment model awards credits based on whether students can prove they have mastered competencies—the knowledge, skills and abilities required in an area of study. Direct assessment is now recognized by the US Department of Education as an alternative pathway for establishing competency in accredited programs.

6. US MERA Strategic Planning: The US MERA Work Group identified two and five-year aspirations for the midwifery profession and US MERA to inform a strategic planning process that will be carried out by the Steering Committee over the next year.

Guest Speaker

John Jennings, MD, ACOG president, attended the 2nd US MERA Annual Meeting in April 2014 as one of several guest speakers, and returned again this year as an observer and guest speaker. Jennings expressed support for the US MERA 2014 agreement to support legislative language stating that, by 2020, all new applicants for midwifery licensure must have successfully completed an education process accredited by ACME or MEAC that qualifies them to take the AMCB or NARM national certification exam. ACOG is willing to explore contributing educational resources to development of the envisioned Midwifery Bridge Certificate, with the ultimate goal of compliance with ICM education standards for all midwives in the United States.

Summary of Next Steps for US MERA in 2015-2016

- Development and implementation of the Midwifery Bridge Certificate
- Finalization of a consensus statement of principles for model midwifery regulation
- Convene the Direct Assessment Task Force to develop a model applying direct assessment principles to midwifery education
- Launch a US MERA website
- Development of the Equity Task Force
- Development a US MERA strategic plan for the next 5 years

Progress and Potential

We are gratified by the extraordinary progress towards strengthening the midwifery profession in the U.S. made by our collaboration over these last years. We are excited by the potential impact of these accomplishments for U.S. women to have access to high-quality maternity care and physiologic birth in all settings. We eagerly look forward to the benefits that will accrue - that in fact, are already beginning to accrue - to midwifery in the United States and to the health of women, babies, families, communities, and the nation.

Please watch for the US MERA website later in the summer, as well as for webinars and other tools for you to engage with us about this work.

Please send your questions and comments to Lorrie Kaplan, current Chair of the US MERA Communications Committee at lkaplan@acnm.org. All questions will be shared with the full Communications Committee for consideration and we will respond to you as quickly as possible.

With great faith and hope,

US MERA Representatives

ACME
Melissa Avery
Katherine Comacho Carr
Heather Maurer
Suzanne Schechter
Peter Johnson

ACNM
Ginger Breedlove
Cathy Collins-Fulea
Lorrie Kaplan
Holly Powell Kennedy
Heather Clarke
Jesse Bushman (Observer)
Dr. John Jennings (Observer)
Kathryn Moore (Observer)

AMCB
Carrie Bright
Tanya Tanner
Kate Hodges
Cara Krulewitch
Kathy Bailey
Robin Neumeier (Observer)

MANA
Colleen Donovan-Batson
Sherry DeVries
Carrie Sparrevohn
Indra Lusero
Jill Breen

MEAC
Heidi Fillmore
Jo Anne Myers-Ciecko
Kristi Ridd-Young
Abigail Aiyepola
Justine Clegg

NACPM
Ellie Daniels
Kaye Kanne
Mary Lawlor
Audrey Levine
Tanya Khemet
Autumn Vergo (Observer)
Barbara Blott (Observer)
Jamie Eidsath (Observer)
Keisha Goode (Observer)

NARM
Shannon Anton
Ida Darragh
Miriam Khalsa
Carol Nelson
Debbie Pulley
Kim Pekin (Observer)

Addendum

US MERA Professional Regulation Committee
Statement on the Licensure of Certified Professional Midwives (CPM)
June 2015

US Midwifery Education, Regulation, and Association (US MERA) organizations support legislative language stating that by 2020, all new applicants for midwifery licensure must have successfully completed an educational program or pathway accredited by an organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) or obtained the Midwifery Bridge Certificate. All applicants for licensure must pass a national midwifery certification examination offered as part of a National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accredited credentialing program, as well as hold a CPM, Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) and/or Certified Midwife (CM) credential.

In 2014, US MERA approved this resolution to support new legislation for the licensure of CPMs in states that do not currently license CPMs. The US MERA Professional Regulation Committee, made up of representatives of US MERA organizations, was then charged with developing legislative language regarding the licensure of CPMs in states proposing new licensure bills. At this time, this language does not apply to states where there are existing statutes for CPM licensure.

At the same time, the US MERA Educational Committee began the development of a consensus statement outlining principles for model midwifery legislation and regulation using the Delphi research process. The consensus statement is anticipated to be made available in mid-summer, 2015, and will serve as a complementary document to the statement on legislative language.

US MERA encourages the inclusion of following two statements in legislative language for states developing licensure statutes for CPMs:

1. For the licensure of CPMs who obtain certification after January 1, 2020, in states with new licensure laws, all applicants for licensure will be required to have completed an educational program or pathway accredited by the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC) and obtained the CPM credential.

2. For CPMs who obtained certification through an educational pathway not accredited by MEAC:

   a. CPMs certified before January 1, 2020, through a non-accredited pathway will be required to obtain the Midwifery Bridge Certificate issued by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) in order to apply for licensure in states using the US MERA language for licensure, or

b. CPMs who have maintained licensure in a state that does not require an accredited education may obtain the Midwifery Bridge Certificate regardless of the date of their certification in order to apply for licensure in a state that includes the US MERA language.

The Midwifery Bridge Certificate, issued by NARM, will be based on the completion of 50 hours of accredited continuing education specific to content in emergency skills for pregnancy and birth, and newborn care, along with other midwifery topics addressing the core competencies of the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM). The Midwifery Bridge Certificate is expected to be implemented by NARM during the summer of 2015. Please watch for more specifics about implementation of the Certificate at www.narm.org. Information about the Certificate will also be posted on the upcoming US MERA website.