



## Direct-Entry Midwife Licensing

### *Use of Certified Nurse Midwives Already Exists in Iowa*

IOMA supports the goal of providing consumers with a choice in who provides their healthcare. Today, Iowa patients have access to a rich variety of healthcare providers: physicians; podiatrists; psychologists; nurse practitioners, including nurse midwives; physician assistants; chiropractors; dentists; pharmacists; physical, occupational, and speech therapists are all licensed by the state to provide care to patients.

In recent years, a variety of individuals and groups have sought the legitimacy of state licensure in an effort to prove to the public that they have the knowledge, training, and skill to safely care for the citizens of Iowa. Because licensure by the state implies to the public that the holder of the license possesses a certain level of skill, knowledge and expertise, the legislature should exercise great caution in creating new licensed professionals.

#### *Did you know?*

- Women already have options for giving birth, that include giving birth at home and the use of a midwife who is certified through the state.
- A form of midwife licensing already exists in Iowa - Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners can specialize as a midwife and receive a certification from the state to become a Certified Nurse Midwife.

The Iowa Legislature has a strong history of ensuring the protection of the public. Recently the legislature increased the requirements for education and training for electricians and plumbers. Unfortunately, direct-entry midwives (also known as lay midwives) receive fewer hours of training in the care of pregnant women than a plumber receives in his area of expertise before being licensed.

Lay midwife training is mostly completed as an apprenticeship. What formal course work that does exist can usually be completed by correspondence. Most schools require the student to complete one year of apprenticeship but do not require attendance of a specific number of patients. By contrast, a journeyman plumber must demonstrate four years of apprenticeship experience.

It should be noted that it is entirely legal for a pregnant woman in Iowa to have her baby at home and to have anyone she chooses in attendance at the birth. However, we believe that the state should not give pregnant women a false sense of security by granting the legitimacy of a license to people who lack the knowledge, training and skill to provide the services they claim to provide.

IOMA supports the use of midwives already sanctioned by the state - certified nurse midwives. Certified nurse midwives have completed nursing school, which includes a much more intensive health care curriculum than would be required of direct-entry midwives. We believe that if women want to have a child delivery outside of the hospital setting, it is even more critical that the process be guided by an educated health care professional.