COMMUNITY BIRTH 101 SERIES

# CPM, CNM, Doula: What's the Difference?



# Do they provide medical care?

YES

Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)

Independent primary providers of preventative and physiological reproductive health care, including pre-conception, pregnancy and birth care, essential newborn care, and extended postpartum care. CPMs are the only perinatal clinical provider required to have training and competency in out-of-hospital birth care.

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YES

Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)

Advanced practice nurses with midwifery specialization providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive care across the life span. CNMs may provide delivery services in both hospital and out-of-hospital settings.

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NO

Doula

Non-clinical professionals who provide emotional, physical, and informational support during pregnancy, birth, postpartum, and many more. Doulas may work with clients in any setting, from hospital to home, and regardless of the client's clinical provider type.

# How do they learn their craft?

## Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)

- Midwifery Education Accreditation Council-accredited education program or equivalent apprenticeship
- National certification through the North American Registry of Midwives
- Multi-year, clinical practice under supervision prior to comprehensive exams

## Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)

- Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education-accredited graduate-level education program
- National certification through the American Midwifery Certification Board
- Multi-year, clinical practice under supervision prior to comprehensive exams

## Doula

- Non-clinical education programs
- Often includes childbirth education, labor support skills, postpartum care, trauma-informed care, and more
- Some pursue specialty certifications (birth, postpartum, fertility, loss, full spectrum, etc.)

# What MA state policies and regulations are in place?

**Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)**

- Regulated by the **MA Board of Registration in Midwifery**
- Licensure as independent providers mandated in 2024. Full regulations under development
- Eligibility for enrollment as a MassHealth provider mandated in 2024 statute

**Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)**

- Regulated by the **MA Board of Registration in Nursing** as independent providers since 2012
- Services must be reimbursed equitably as compared to physicians under MassHealth per 2024 statute

**Doula**

- May enroll as a MassHealth providers
- Free and optional **DPH doula certification program** launching in March 2026

# DID YOU KNOW ?

By law, in Massachusetts, CNMs and CPMs may practice, prescribe and bill for services independently, without physician supervision.

Greenfield Community College is developing Massachusetts' **first accredited training program for Certified Professional Midwives** to expand community birth workforce!

Midwives and doulas play distinct but complementary roles within the perinatal system.

Together, they provide essential care for families that are…

- Rooted in community,
- Grounded in relationships,
- Responsive to culture and lived experience.

They **advocate**. They **protect**. They **save lives**.

**Strong, coordinated perinatal health systems require both.**

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