

**ICM International Definition of the Midwife  
Revised first paragraph 21 February 2011**

**Draft #6**

**“A midwife is a person who has successfully completed a midwifery education programme that is duly recognized in the country where it is located and that is based on the ICM *Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice* and the framework of the ICM *Global Standards for Midwifery Education*; who has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery and use the title ‘midwife’; and who demonstrates competency in the practice of midwifery.**”

The midwife is recognised as a responsible and accountable professional who works in partnership with women to give the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct births on the midwife’s own responsibility and to provide care for the newborn and the infant. This care includes preventative measures, the promotion of normal birth, the detection of complications in mother and child, the accessing of medical care or other appropriate assistance and the carrying out of emergency measures.

The midwife has an important task in health counselling and education, not only for the woman, but also within the family and the community. This work should involve antenatal education and preparation for parenthood and may extend to women’s health, sexual or reproductive health and child care.

A midwife may practise in any setting including the home, community, hospitals, clinics or health units.”

**Rationale for changes to first paragraph only:**

Additions: The major issues with the 2005 ICM *Definition of a Midwife* are that there was no recognition 1) of the person being educated to competency in the ICM competencies or 2) the person’s need to demonstrate competence in the practice of midwifery. The ICM has had the essential competencies since 2002 and they need to be used as minimum content in a midwifery education program, and the phrase “demonstrates competency” is the benchmark for quality midwifery practice. It is important to agree that the outcome at the end of a pre-service education programme is, at minimum, a competent clinician.

The wording of the phrase, “**based on** the ICM *Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice* and framework of the ICM *Global Standards for Midwifery Education*” is deliberate as ICM recognizes that some current midwifery education programmes may not presently teach all of the basic competencies or meet all of the educational standards. ICM is committed to support Member Associations as they work to reach these global standards.

Deletions: The phrase “**successfully completed a midwifery education programme**” takes the place of words in the current definition of “having been regularly admitted to a midwifery educational programme...” and “has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery...”. This definition refers to the graduate, so the issue of admission to a program is not relevant. The amended wording incorporates the intended meaning more concisely.

*Agenda Item 10.1: International Definition of the Midwife*

**Rationale for NO changes in rest of 2005 ICM *Definition of Midwife*:**

The remainder of the definition requires no further changes as it is consistent with ICM core documents and position statements.