

# PushNews from The Big Push for Midwives Campaign

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, April 28, 2009



## **Flu Cases Raise Concern About Shortage of Midwives With Expertise in Out-of-Hospital Birth** *Advocates Call on State and Federal Policy Makers to Prioritize Maternal and Infant Safety*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 28, 2009)—Maternal and infant health advocates are calling on policy makers to take action to ensure that there are enough Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs), who are trained as experts in out-of-hospital delivery, to meet the needs of pregnant women in the event that a flu pandemic makes hospitals unsafe settings for the provision of maternity care.

“Hospitals filled to capacity with flu patients are unsafe and inaccessible places for healthy women to deliver their babies,” said Colette Bernhard, Vice President of Illinois Families for Midwifery. “Only a very small percentage of nurse-midwives have undergone the additional training needed to establish out-of-hospital practices, while legal and reimbursement barriers at the state and federal level prevent far too many Certified Professional Midwives, who already have the necessary training and equipment, to utilize their services to the fullest. Given the very real possibility of a flu pandemic, the need to fully incorporate CPMs into our health care system could not be more urgent.”

Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), who are trained to practice in hospital settings, are legally authorized by all 50 states and are federally mandated Medicaid providers. CPMs are the only professional midwives in the United States whose educational and credentialing process requires them to develop the specialized skills necessary to safely deliver babies in private homes and in freestanding birth centers. However, CPMs are legally authorized to practice in just over half the states and are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement in fewer than a dozen states.

Recognizing the need for more midwives with expertise in out-of-hospital maternity care and risk assessment, as well as the ability to safely triage laboring women during a disaster, advocates called on state and federal policy makers to take immediate steps to safeguard maternal and infant health in preparation for a possible flu pandemic.

“First, all states need to get on board and license CPMs to practice legally,” said Russ Fawcett of The National Birth Policy Coalition. “But it is every bit as critical that our federal policy makers require Homeland Security to include CPMs—who function as mobile primary care facilities for pregnant women—in disaster planning at local, regional, and national levels and as eligible providers for the National Health Service Corps.”

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, members of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood formed the National Working Group for Women and Infant Needs in Emergencies in the United States, and the group’s April 2007 [report](#) includes CPMs among those who can educate and train home-based delivery skills to institution-based birth providers.

[The Big Push for Midwives](#) is the first initiative of the National Birth Policy Coalition (NBPC), whose mission is to promote the autonomous practice of Certified Professional Midwives and Certified Nurse-Midwives and to ensure the availability of safe, evidence-based care during pregnancy, labor, birth, and postpartum. The Big Push is a nationally coordinated campaign to advocate for regulation and licensure of Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and to push back against the attempts of the American Medical Association Scope of Practice Partnership to deny American families access to legal midwifery care.

Through its work with state-level advocates, the Big Push is helping to build a new model of U.S. maternity care built on expanding access to out-of-hospital maternity care and CPMs, who provide affordable, quality, community-based care that is proven to reduce costly and preventable interventions as well as the rate of low-birth weight and premature births. Media inquiries: Steff Hedenkamp (816) 506-4630, [steff@thebigpushformidwives.org](mailto:steff@thebigpushformidwives.org).

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The Big Push for Midwives Campaign is fiscally sponsored by Sustainable Markets Foundation, a not-for-profit organization recognized as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3). The mission of the Big Push for Midwives is to build winning, state-level advocacy campaigns towards successful regulation and licensure of Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

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