

Media Alert

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South Dakota Mother to Walk Across the State to Raise Awareness About Lack of Access to Certified Professional Midwives

Hundreds to Join Her in Show of Support for Change in State Law

CENTERVILLE, SD (August 12, 2009) – Beginning on August 21, local mother Debbie Pease will walk four miles in 11 communities across South Dakota, completing the 44th mile of her journey on her 44th birthday just six days later in Sioux Falls. She and hundreds of citizens from across the state, who are joining her along the way, are walking to raise awareness about the need to change state law to authorize Certified Professional Midwives, who are specially trained to provide out-of-hospital maternity care, to practice legally.

“Families in Minnesota, Montana, and Wisconsin have been benefiting from the services of Certified Professional Midwives for years,” said Ronda Kvigne, who was forced to cross state lines in order to deliver her last baby under the care of a Certified Professional Midwife. “It is high time that South Dakota families had the same opportunities.”

Certified Nurse-Midwives are trained to provide hospital-based care and are legally authorized to practice in all 50 states. Fewer than 1% of nurse-midwives nationwide provide maternity care in private homes or freestanding birth centers, and only one nurse-midwife in South Dakota provides out-of-hospital care. As a result, families in most parts of the state who choose to give birth outside of the hospital—most often for religious, cultural or financial reasons—are left with no access to legally-practicing midwives with expertise in out-of-hospital delivery.

“The first step is to license and regulate Certified Professional Midwives so that families who choose out-of-hospital delivery have access to providers who have met the appropriate educational, training, and credentialing standards,” said Travis Brink of [SD Safe Childbirth Options, Inc.](#), a consumer advocacy group that is working to expand maternity care options in the state.

Demand for the services of Certified Professional Midwives is on the rise throughout the country, while The Big Push for Midwives, a national [campaign](#) to license them in all 50 states, has been making steady progress. Since 2005 six states have passed legislation legally authorizing Certified Professional Midwives to practice, and last year Idaho became the 26th state to do so. Legislation is pending in an additional 18 states.

“The research consistently shows that Certified Professional Midwives have excellent outcomes at significantly reduced costs,” said Pease. “The state of Washington commissioned a study that found a biennial savings to public and private insurers of more than \$3 million. My hope is that the incredible outpouring of energy generated by the Walk for Midwives will compel policy makers in South Dakota to take notice and to recognize the need to change our laws so that families in our own state have access to the safe, proven, and cost-effective care offered by Certified Professional Midwives.”

Pease will begin her walk at 8 a.m. on Friday, August 21 in Spearfish at WomanKind Midwifery located at 544 N 7th Street. Everyone is invited to walk a distance that is comfortable for them and learn more about this issue. There is no fee to join the Walks, but everyone is encouraged to buy a T-shirt and/or make a donation to SD Safe Childbirth Options, Inc.

For more information about each of the 11 Walks and to download photos, please visit WalkForMidwives.com.

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