

Core Document

ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Regulation

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Introduction

The primary function of regulation is to protect the public. Robust regulatory systems also support midwives to work autonomously to their full scope of practice. By raising the status of midwives through regulation, the standard of care across the sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health (SRMNAH) services will be improved.

The ICM sets the global standards for midwifery regulation in alignment with the global evidence-base. The aim of the ICM's Global Standards for Midwifery Regulation is to promote regulatory mechanisms that protect the public by ensuring that safe and competent midwives provide high quality midwifery care to women, gender diverse people, and their newborns.

The standards have two applications, dependent on whether a country has midwifery regulatory processes in place or not:

1. **Review of existing regulatory processes.** The standards can be used to guide amendments to existing processes and promote regulatory frameworks that support autonomous midwifery practice.
2. **Development of regulatory processes.** The standards can be used to guide health authorities on how to establish regulatory frameworks for midwifery where none currently exist.

Midwives' associations are encouraged to advocate for the use of these standards for the improvement or implementation of regulatory legislation, policies, and procedures. The separate professional identity of midwives must be recognised in all regulatory processes. Where midwives are regulated alongside or together with nurses or other health professionals, the aim is that separate and specific regulatory structures and processes are established to enable autonomous midwifery practice and ensure high quality midwifery care in alignment with ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice (1).

Please refer to the [ICM website](#) for more regulation resources.

The standards are organised under the following four (4) categories:

1. **Models of regulation:** the type of regulation e.g. via legislation
2. **Protection of title:** who may use the title 'midwife'
3. **Governance:** the processes for establishing of a regulatory authority and the processes by which the regulatory authority carries out its functions



4. **Functions:** the mechanisms by which a regulatory authority regulates midwives under the sub-categories of:
- Scope of practice
 - Pre-service midwifery education
 - Registration
 - Continuing competence
 - Complaints and discipline
 - Code of Conduct and Ethics

Category 1: Models of Regulation

- 1.1 Regulation is midwifery specific.
- 1.2 Regulation should be at a national level.

Category 2: Protection of Title

- 2.1 Only those authorised under relevant legislation may use the title ‘midwife’ endowed by that legislation.

Category 3: Governance

- 3.1 The legislation sets a transparent process for nomination, selection and appointment of members to the regulatory authority and identifies roles and terms of appointment.
- 3.2 Midwives should be proportionally represented in the regulatory authority.
- 3.3 There must be provision for representation by service users and members of the public.
- 3.4 The governance structures of the regulatory authority should be set out by the legislation.



3.5 Where midwives are regulated alongside other professions, a separate board or committee should be established that is responsible for midwifery standards and guidance.

3.6 The chairperson of a midwifery regulatory authority must be a midwife.

3.7 The regulatory authority is funded by members of the profession.

3.8 The regulatory authority collaborates with the midwifery professional association(s).

3.9 The regulatory authority works in collaboration with key stakeholders such as ministries and departments of health.

3.10 The regulatory authority works in collaboration with other regulatory authorities both nationally and internationally.

Category 4: Functions

Standard 4.1: Scope of Practice

4.1.1 The regulatory authority defines the scope of practice of the midwife that is consistent with the ICM's International Definition and Scope of Practice of the Midwife (2).

Standard 4.2: Pre-Service Midwifery Education

4.2.1 The regulatory authority sets the minimum standards for pre-service midwifery education and accreditation of midwifery education institutions that are consistent with the ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education (3).

4.2.2 The regulatory authority approves pre-service midwifery education programmes leading to the qualification prescribed for midwifery registration.



4.2.3 The regulatory authority accredits midwifery education institutions providing approved pre-service midwifery education programmes.

4.2.4 The regulatory authority audits pre-service midwifery education programmes and midwifery education institutions.

4.2.5 Midwife teachers and midwifery clinical preceptor/clinical teachers must have completed a programme of study in teaching.

Standard 4.3: Registration

4.3.1 The legislation sets the criteria for midwifery registration and/or licensure.

4.3.2 The regulatory authority develops standards and processes for registration and/or licensure.

4.3.3 The regulatory authority develops processes for assessing the equivalence of applicants who have completed their pre-service education in other countries for entry to the midwifery register/or licensure.

4.3.4 The regulatory authority establishes criteria, pathways and processes leading to registration/licensure for midwives from other countries who do not meet registration requirements.

4.3.5 Mechanisms exist for a range of registration and/or licensure status.

4.3.6 The regulatory authority maintains a live register of midwives and makes it publicly available.

4.3.7 The regulatory authority collects information about midwives and their practice to contribute to workforce planning and research.

Standard 4.4: Continuing Competence

4.4.1 The regulatory authority implements a mechanism through which midwives regularly demonstrate their continuing competence to practise.



4.4.2 The legislation sets out separate requirements for entry to the midwifery register and/or first license and ongoing regular relicensing.

4.4.3 A mechanism exists for regular relicensing of the midwife's practice.

4.4.4 Mechanisms exist for return to practice programmes for midwives who have been out of practice for a defined period.

Standard 4.5: Complaints and Discipline

4.5.1 The legislation authorises the regulatory authority to define expected standards of conduct and to define what constitutes unprofessional conduct or professional misconduct.

4.5.2 The legislation authorises the regulatory authority to impose, review and remove penalties, sanctions and conditions on practice as related to competence, conduct or health.

4.5.3 The legislation sets out the powers and processes for receipt, investigation, determination and resolution of complaints.

4.5.4 The regulatory authority has policies and processes to manage complaints in relation to competence, conduct or health impairment in a timely manner.

4.5.5 The legislation should provide for the separation of powers between the investigation of complaints and the hearing and determining of charges of professional misconduct.

4.5.6 Complaints management processes are transparent and afford natural justice to all parties.

Standard 4.6: Code of Conduct and Ethics

4.6.1 The regulatory authority sets the standards of conduct and ethics.



References

- (1)** International Confederation of Midwives. ICM Core Document: Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice. 2024.
- (2)** International Confederation of Midwives. ICM Core Document: International Definition and Scope of Practice of the Midwife. 2024.
- (3)** International Confederation of Midwives. ICM Core Document: Global Standards for Midwifery Education. 2021.