

Section A: Introduction

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History of MEAC

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC) was formed in 1991 by the National Coalition of Midwifery Educators as a not-for-profit organization. MEAC's standards for accreditation were developed by expert midwifery educators from a variety of midwifery educational programs in the United States. MEAC is a membership organization comprised of institutions and programs accredited by MEAC.

Mission

MEAC's mission is to promote excellence in midwifery education through accreditation. It creates standards and criteria for the education of midwives. MEAC standards incorporate the nationally recognized core competencies and guiding principles set by the Midwives Alliance of North America, the International Confederation of Midwives, and the requirements for national certification of the North American Registry of Midwives.

MEAC's accreditation criteria for midwifery education programs reflect the unique components and philosophy of the Midwives Model of Care™.

Purpose

The purpose of MEAC is to establish standards for the education of competent midwives, and to provide a process for self-evaluation and peer evaluation for diverse educational programs. MEAC is a non-profit organizations approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

MEAC'S Philosophy on Midwifery Education

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, is an accrediting body for direct-entry midwifery educational programs. Accreditation plays an essential role in high quality midwifery training and practice by requiring educators to follow a path of continual growth and quality improvement. MEAC embraces our crucial role in the accountability of the midwifery profession.

We acknowledge that there is an inherent tension between upholding objective standards and maintaining a rich variety of options for students and for the childbearing public. MEAC accepts the challenge of weaving those threads into the framework of our core mission, documents, and standards.

We believe that the Midwives Model of Care (Copyright (c) 1996-2008, Midwifery Task Force, Inc.), within which MEAC standards are based, can be a positive influence in healthcare through collaboration with all professions working in the maternity care system. MEAC utilizes the Midwives Model of Care as a source of ideals for educating up-and-coming midwives, and as a map for MEAC's work as accreditors, through respectful, fair, individualized, responsive, and transparent interactions.

- MEAC standards form a blueprint for steady growth and upgrading of educational programs that are built on current best-practice research and evidence, utilizing various educational routes including conventional classroom learning, distance learning, and clinical placement
- MEAC encourages broad student and faculty input into designing innovative programs that address the needs of the many communities midwives come from and serve.
- MEAC values and cultivates competency-based educational programs that are not defined by the length of time spent in school but by meeting internationally recognized standards of core competency.
- MEAC promotes the training of midwives who will provide care for culturally, socially, and economically diverse families.
- MEAC strives for inclusivity, in the composition of our board and in the education we oversee, for those of differing gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, marital status, creed, age, and ability/disability.

MEAC believes that accreditation has the power to effect positive change in the maternity care system. This accountability can raise the standing of skilled midwives as primary providers in healthcare for childbearing families by furthering training programs that integrate the Midwives Model of Care, embrace diversity, and incorporate innovations in knowledge and provision of care.

What is Accreditation?

The practice of accreditation arose in the United States as a means of conducting non-governmental, peer evaluation of educational institutions and programs in order to ensure a basic level of quality. Private educational associations, such as MEAC, adopt criteria reflecting the qualities of a sound educational program and develop procedures for evaluating institutions and programs to determine whether they are operating at basic levels of quality.

Each institution or program accredited by MEAC:

1. Utilizes competent, qualified faculty.
2. Bases its course of education on nationally recognized standards.
3. Admits qualified students based on established criteria.
4. Demonstrates students' success and satisfaction, producing graduates prepared for licensure and/or national certification by North American Registry of Midwives and employment in the field of midwifery.
5. Advertises its course of study truthfully.
6. Practices sound financial management.

To become accredited, each program or institution must:

1. Make a self-evaluation study of its program based on MEAC standards.
2. Submit this study for review by an outside committee of peers and experts in midwifery education.
3. Open its doors to a thorough inspection.
4. Repeat the process every four to six years.

The applicant program or institution voluntarily elects to apply for accreditation and it voluntarily agrees to comply with all MEAC standards. The burden of proof in demonstrating compliance with standards rests with the institution or program, not with MEAC. The institution must prove to MEAC that it meets or exceeds the standards. MEAC considers information about an applicant institution from any source in reaching its conclusions.

What Types of Programs Are Eligible?

The Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC) welcomes all direct-entry midwifery education institutions and programs in the United States to participate in the process of accreditation.

Institutions and programs accredited by MEAC provide the student with the academic and clinical requirements to qualify for the North American Registry of Midwives national examination leading to certification as a Certified Professional Midwife (CPM).

Full eligibility information can be found in Section G: Policies and Procedures.

Benefits of Accreditation for Midwifery Schools

MEAC accreditation—

1. Is an advocacy process that helps midwifery programs evaluate themselves according to their own goals.
2. Provides technical assistance to the applicant schools to achieve a high-quality program that meets MEAC standards.
3. Offers a process that can be used as a guide by institutions in evaluating their present program and enhancing the quality of education and training provided.
4. Verifies that an institution or program meets established standards.
5. Determines that a midwifery education program has set goals for students who enroll, has provided services that enable these students to meet those goals, and can in fact show that students have benefited from the learning experiences provided.
6. Assists prospective students in identifying acceptable programs or institutions.
7. Assists institutions in determining the acceptability of transfer credits.
8. Offers a unique professional development opportunity for school staff and faculty to evaluate their own institutions or programs.
9. Protects an institution or program against harmful internal and external pressure.
10. Helps to identify institutions and programs for the investment of public and private funds.
11. Provides a reliable indicator of educational quality to employers, counselors, educators, government officials, and the public.
12. Establishes one of several considerations used as a basis for determining eligibility for Federal student financial aid programs.
13. Provides communication to institutions about issues, changes, and updates within the midwifery community that affect accreditation standards and procedures.

Members of the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council

Institutions and programs accredited and preaccredited by MEAC are MEAC members and they elect the Board of Directors. Board members are the decision-makers regarding accreditation and preaccreditation for applicant schools. They include professional midwives, midwifery educators, midwifery program administrators, consumers of midwifery education, consumers of midwifery care and members of the public. MEAC also employs administrative staff.

Visit the MEAC website at <http://www.meacschools.org> for a current list of MEAC member schools, Board of Directors, and administrative staff as well as contact information.

Contact Information for MEAC

Website: www.meacschools.org

Email: info@meacschools.org

Mailing Address: 850 Mt. Pleasant Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103