The safety of birth in any setting is of utmost priority. While the majority of births are uncomplicated, there is a risk of an adverse outcome in any setting.

ACNM has established clear guidelines for home birth and publishes a handbook that addresses selection criteria for home birth clients, mechanisms for medical consultation and transfer and the establishment of quality management systems for home birth.1 The informed consent process for home birth includes a delineation of potential risks and benefits of each available birth site and provisions for transport if conditions require personnel and/or equipment available only in the hospital setting.

The Research
In recent years, high-quality prospective controlled cohort studies and descriptive studies have established that planned home births achieve excellent perinatal outcomes.2-12 Home birth is also credited with reduced use of medical interventions associated with perinatal morbidity, including narcotic or epidural analgesia, augmentation or induction of labor, and assisted vaginal births or cesarean section.13-16 Recent data from a large North American prospective study compare outcomes of planned hospital births and planned home births when attended by midwives who apply consistent selection criteria, and function within an infrastructure that provides support and consultation as requested.17,18 This study found that planned home birth for low risk women was associated with lower rates of medical intervention but similar mortality to that of similar hospital births.

- ACNM urges payers, policymakers and experts in the delivery of health care services to women and childbearing families to participate in an independent, university-based multi-disciplinary consensus conference on interprofessional strategies to increase safety and access to qualified providers across all birth settings.


7 Janssen PA. Outcomes of five years of planned home birth attended by regulated midwives versus planned hospital birth in British Columbia. Canadian Association of Midwives 7th Annual General Meeting proceedings; Vancouver, Canada. 2007.


11 Wiegers. Outcome of planned home and planned hospital births in low risk pregnancies. BMJ.


