



Midwives' Association *of* Washington State

MAWS Annual Update: Spring 2010

Reflections 2009 Vision 2010

As the Midwives Association of Washington State (MAWS) looks back on the second half of 2009, we are proud of the supportive role we were able to play in the MAMA campaign. Thanks to the efforts and volunteer work of midwives and their clients from all over the state, we helped to raise significant funds for the campaign and to secure support from Senator Maria Cantwell of the powerful Senate Finance Committee. Cantwell's desire for low income women all over the country to have the same access to midwifery care that women in WA state have is reflected in her support of Medicaid reimbursement for free-

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standing birth centers and midwives who attend births there. In WA State, Medicaid reimbursement for home births was achieved along this same trajectory following on the heels of birth center reimbursement. Jeff Thompson, Chief Medical Officer for DSHS in Washington, also wrote a letter to federal Medicaid lawmakers emphasizing the cost effectiveness of midwifery care. MAWS presented these letters to our state legislators on our Lobby Day and these letters were received as compelling evidence that the state is getting good value by increasing access to the services of midwives.

At the MAWS Board retreat this year, we initially felt some concern that our focus on this national campaign had distracted us from our local work, but then we realized that, in fact, the work we were doing this past year on the MAMA Campaign was quite relevant and helped us to both

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NIH VBAC Consensus Conference March 8-10, 2010

A long-awaited and long-overdue VcomeBAC(k) may be on the horizon!

On March 8-10, 2010, the National Institutes of Health held a 3-day Consensus Conference in Bethesda, MD to examine the evidence regarding vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) and elective repeat cesarean section (ERCS) and to issue recommendations based on this evidence. Suzy Myers, Chair of the Bastyr University Department of Midwifery, and Audrey Levine, President of the Midwives' Association of Washington State (MAWS), attended the conference, along with several hundred other maternity care providers and advocates: midwives, midwifery consumers, and midwife-friendly OB-GYNs and family physicians, as well as prominent researchers who have spent years studying vaginal birth

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refine our skills for working on public policy initiatives and fundraising. MAWS also focused this year on improving our administrative operations and membership services. We hired a program director

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who has helped us get more organized, set up a membership renewal database, maintain our website as a current resource and send out a bi-monthly electronic newsletter and as needed e-alerts. We continue to hold two conferences per year and maintain our Quality Management Program offering Peer Review and Incident Reviews on a regular basis.

MAWS also staffed a vendor table and hosted a reception at the ACNM convention held this past year in Seattle. Many visiting CNMs were very interested to learn more about the ways in which Licensed Midwives and Certified Nurse Midwives work together in WA State.

On January 21, MAWS hosted our annual Lobby Day where we asked legislators to support a number of measures affecting midwives in Washington, as well as Senator Karen Fraser's and Rep. Jeannie Darneille's anti-shackling legislation which would prohibit the restraining of incarcerated women during labor and birth. More than 30 midwives, student midwives and midwifery consumers joined us, and we had more than 40 scheduled appointments with state senators and representatives. (See the legislative report for the outcomes from this work.)

We are also eager to finally launch our Better Birth Options campaign. This Spring we are developing our campaign plan as we seek to pursue an ambitious agenda. MAWS envisions:

- Adequate numbers and diversity of professionally-trained, licensed midwives to provide maternity services throughout the state (including at community health centers), especially in underserved areas where access to prenatal care has been identified as a significant problem particularly for low-income women and families.
- A successful public policy and public awareness campaign normalizing birth and promoting midwife-attended births as an optimal choice for women with low-risk pregnancies.
- An overall reduction in the c-section rate to 10% with 30% of all births in the state occurring with midwives in all settings: home, free standing birth-centers and hospitals by 2025.

OB COAP Clinical Outcomes Assessment Program

The Midwives' Association of Washington State (MAWS) was invited by the Foundation for Health Care Quality to participate, along with 6 hospitals in Washington State, in a 6-month project called OB-COAP (Clinical Outcomes Assessment Program). Licensed midwives who are members of MAWS have been asked to contribute very basic data for out-of-hospital births occurring between March and August 2010.

We are excited about this opportunity to put our data alongside hospital-based data to demonstrate not only that licensed midwifery care in Washington State results in excellent maternal and neonatal outcomes but that these results can be achieved without a heavy reliance on costly medical interventions. Our participation in OB-COAP is being regarded by the Foundation for Health Care Quality as part of a strategy to affect change in hospital-based birth practices, lower costs, and improve outcomes for moms and babies. In other words, this is a chance for midwifery to serve as a benchmark for appropriate physiologic care for low-risk childbearing women in all settings.

In March, many midwives and representatives from their practices took part in trainings on how to use the OB COAP data entry interface. We already have data from 80 births logged. If you still need to be trained or would like us to help you find a volunteer to help enter data for your practice, please send an email

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A Report on the 2010 Legislative Session

We may not always achieve every one of our goals, but we have managed to keep midwifery very much on the minds of the legislators.



Jo Anne Myers-Ciecko at the Washington State Capitol

It was a mixed year for MAWS on the legislative front. We were successful in preserving the state's Midwifery Advisory Committee so that midwives can continue to provide their expertise as part of the initial review of cases brought to the Department of Health.

The anti-shackling legislation that we supported was signed into law by Governor Gregoire back in March. It's hard to believe that we actually needed to pass a law to prohibit the inhumane practice of shackling pregnant women during labor, but at least now incarcerated women in Washington State will be able to give birth with the dignity and the safety that all women deserve. Kudos to Sara Ainsworth at Legal Voice for her impressive advocacy and leadership on this issue.

In a year with an unprecedented budget shortfall, we did manage to keep the midwifery licensing fee from increasing dramatically. During the final budget negotiation process, however, a \$50 increase in our fee was approved—beginning in July 2010, it will cost \$500 to renew your midwifery license. We had lobbied for a \$25 increase in our licensing fee that would give us access to HEAL-WA, the on-line University of Washington Health Sciences Library system. Unfortunately, although the HEAL-WA bill we introduced passed unanimously out of the House, it died in the Senate. Our indefatigable lobbyist, Amber Ulvenes, worked hard behind the scenes to try to revive the HEAL-WA bill and it seemed promising because we had a champion in Rep. Eileen Cody, chair of the House Health Care Committee. Rep. Cody appreciated that the midwives were asking to be put into the HEAL-WA legislation while other health care professions were trying to get out. We'll continue to work on this issue with her and remain optimistic that licensed midwives will gain access to HEAL-WA next year.

Both the House and the Senate Health Care Committees are planning to look at the licensing fee structure for the health care professions during the interim. MAWS will monitor these discussions and provide input. We are also eager to work in the coming months with Rep. Eileen Cody and Sen. Karen Keiser on women's health care issues which they both have indicated will be a priority during the 2011 legislative session.

Thank you to all of you who showed up on Lobby Day and to those of you who contacted your representatives and senators and had your clients do so, too. We may not always achieve every one of our goals, but we have managed to keep midwifery very much on the minds of the legislators. We feel confident that, with the implementation of healthcare reform and the growing emphasis on cost containment and quality of care, the benefits of midwifery care will increasingly be recognized.

to Louisa Wales at mlwaleshall@gmail.com. We want to encourage every professional MAWS member to participate!

If you are an associate or supporting member or a donor, MAWS is seeking funds to cover the cost of our participation in this project. Your donation in any amount would be greatly appreciated to help fund this important work. Please write to Lynn Hughes at info@washingtonmidwives.org to learn about options for donating.

Thank You, MAWS Donors!

2009/2010 Donors (including Fall 2009 Conference Sponsors):

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Thank you to those donors who contributed to our public awareness work by making a contribution through Citizens for Midwifery to be donated to MAWS. If you're interested in making a tax-deductible contribution in this way, please write to info@washingtonmidwives.org for more information.

after cesarean, many of whom are clearly advocating for changes in policy to expand access to this option.

The 16- member panel, “knowledgeable about the general topic but who have not published on or have a publicly stated opinion on the topic” represented a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Before the conference, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) prepared a comprehensive background paper for the panel’s consideration. After conducting a systematic review of the evidence, this report concluded that, “VBAC is a reasonable and safe choice for the majority of women with a prior cesarean. Moreover, there is emerging evidence of serious harms relating to multiple cesareans.”

Highlights of the research presented to the NIH panel for consideration:

- Women choosing elective repeat cesarean delivery have a rate of maternal mortality of 13.4/100,000 births compared to 3.8/100,000 with a trial of labor after cesarean
- Long term maternal risks of repeat cesarean delivery in subsequent pregnancies include an increased incidence of placental implantation problems (accreta, increta and percreta) as well as increased surgical complications. Women having three or more cesareans have a 3% risk of placenta previa and 0.56% chance of placenta accreta. The total United States maternal mortality rate appears to be increasing and the incidence of repeat cesarean is believed to play a role in this disturbing increase.
- A trial of labor after a prior cesarean is associated with an increase in perinatal mortality to 1.3/1000 births compared to 0.5/1000 births in women choosing repeat cesarean delivery. The increase is statistically significant; however it is similar to the perinatal mortality rate for infants of born to nulliparous women in labor.

After two days of research presentation and “town-hall forums” in which open discussion with the presenters, panelists and audience took place, the panel developed a draft statement which they presented on the morning of the third day for audience commentary. This provided some of the best input from the many experts and advocates in attendance, and clearly resulted in some revisions to the panel’s draft report, released online late on day 3. A final report will be released approximately 6 weeks after the conference ended.

For us, the conference provided an extraordinary opportunity for dialogue and networking with many leaders in maternity care reform. It is clear to us that midwives have an important contribution to make in the provision of care to women with prior cesarean sections and also towards addressing some of the critical gaps in the evidence regarding clinical management, client decision-making, psycho-social outcomes and safety of trial of labor for low-risk women.

2009 Women of Wisdom Award

At our Fall 2009 Conference and Annual Meeting, MAWS was excited to launch our new Women of Wisdom award and take time to recognize the senior midwives among our membership who have been practicing for 25 years or more, including those who have practiced independently as midwives prior to becoming licensed. Since this was the first year we were presenting the award, there are a number of recipients. Each recipient was honored by one of her peers with a story or memory of her unique approach to midwifery.

Recipients of the award were Sally Avenson, CNM, ARNP, Mifawnwy Carlson, LM, Beth Coyote, LM, CPM, Carol Gautschi, LM, CPM, Laura Hamilton, LM, CPM, Marge Mansfield, LM, CPM, Winni McNamara, LM, ARNP, Suzy Myers, LM, CPM, Nancy Spencer, LM, CPM. In addition, the MAWS Board took this opportunity to recognize Jo Anne Myers Ciecko as an “Honorary Midwife” and Woman of Wisdom. For more than 25 years, Jo Anne has lovingly devoted her life to our profession here in Washington, as well as nationally and globally.



Pictured left to right: Suzy Myers, Beth Coyote, Winni McNamara, JoAnne Myers Ciecko, Mifawnwy Carlson and Carol Gautschi. (Sally Avenson, Laura Hamilton, Marge Mansfield and Nancy Spencer were, unfortunately, not present to accept their awards.)



Over 50 birth professionals attended the MAWS 2009 Fall Conference which included an excellent workshop on homeopathy as well as Gail Hart's workshop on 3rd stage which included a great exercise on blood loss estimation. (Gail is pictured here, front left.)

Support our Associate Members

We want to take this opportunity to thank all of our Associate Members who join at the \$100 level and are listed in our “Midwife-Friendly” Services section of the web site directory. You will find an array of providers here: naturopaths, acupuncturists, massage therapists, doulas, childbirth educators, to name just a few. Please click on “Midwife-Friendly Services” from the MAWS web site (www.washingtonmidwives.org) to view this list as a referral source for your clients. **And encourage the service providers you work with (and refer to) to become MAWS associate members!**

A Dalai Mama - Your Birth Guru
A Gentler Birth Doula Service
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Snohomish Valley Holistic Medicine
Suzanne Wenner LAc LMP
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MAWS 2010 Spring Conference

Birth in Balance: Attitudes and Practice-- Integrating What We Know



The recently released “Blueprint for Action” based on last year’s Childbirth Connection Symposium includes a goal of cross-training among providers of maternity care. In the spirit of furthering this goal, MAWS is excited to offer a cross-disciplinary spring conference that we hope will attract a wide array of maternity care providers. We hope to see midwives, OBs, Family Practice physicians, OB and Family Practice residents, OB nurses, doulas, and childbirth educators. We are especially interested in welcoming hospital-based providers for an opportunity to share our respective perspectives.

As a keynote speaker MAWS is pleased to welcome Michael Klein, MD from British Columbia. For anyone not familiar with Michael Klein, he was one of the principals on the recent home birth study out of BC and is outspoken in his support for midwifery and normal birth. Aside from the home birth research, Michael is eager to present findings around the attitudes towards birth of different types of care providers.

Penny Simkin will speak about her recently published work on the Occiput Posterior Fetus; Molly Gray ND/LM will speak about toxins in pregnancy (Molly recently testified at a Senate hearing on this topic); and Sheila Capestany will be discussing the superb outcomes from the Open Arms Community Doula Project.

Please take a moment to invite your colleagues to attend. More information and online registration can be found at www.birthinbalance.org.



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*It's not too late to register for the MAWS 2010 Spring Conference
Visit www.birthinbalance.org for details and registration*