

Home Birth Crisis in Illinois

Every year, hundreds of Illinois families choose to give birth at home for deeply held religious, philosophical or cultural beliefs. Because of these compelling reasons, these families are unlikely to choose hospital birth even if access to care is scarce. Many of these families cannot find appropriate care, including prenatal care, and deliver their babies at home *without a licensed home birth provider*.

Recent research reports a 77% increase in home birth rates across the U.S. from 2009 - 2012.

Although these rates have increased dramatically, at more than 50 Illinois home birth providers have stopped providing home services over the past 15 years. This leaves a huge access-to-care problem for Illinois home birth families and has created an underground network of community midwives with varying levels of training. Currently, there are fewer than 10 Illinois counties in which licensed home birth practices (doctors or nurse-midwives) are based. Families in the rest of the state are entirely without home birth care unless they engage the services of an unlicensed community midwife, but then, they have no assurance that their midwife has met any standards.



Black Market Maternity Care is NEVER SAFE!

Setting standards and regulating community midwives through licensure is the best way to protect families and their newborns.

A Solution: Certified Professional Midwives

Because of the severe shortage of Illinois home birth midwives, some families are crossing the border so that they can deliver Illinois babies in Wisconsin or Missouri hotels. One Illinois over-the-border baby is too many. Of even greater concern is the growing number of unassisted home births that occur when families have searched for a home birth midwife and cannot locate one. The risk of mortality is significantly increased in unassisted birth. *Even one Illinois mother delivering her baby in this way is one too many.*

The Coalition for Illinois Midwifery supports the Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) credential as the basis for state licensure as a licensed midwife (LM). The CPM is the only credential that validates home birth knowledge, training and experience, and is now used as the basis for licensure in 30 states. Several other states do not license CPMs but have no prohibition. In fact, only 10 states, including Illinois, actively prohibit CPMs. *Those states that do license CPMs, tend to have lower perinatal mortality rates*

Midwives who are licensed, have specialized training in home birth, and are nationally certified are a much safer alternative for a planned home birth than having an unlicensed midwife or no midwife at all.

**PLEASE SUPPORT
The Home Birth Safety Act
HB677 & SB1754**