

Process for Developing Position Statements and Guidelines

Definitions

An Australian College of Midwives (ACM) **position statement** is a document that explains the ACM's beliefs or stance on a particular topic or issue. The statement may be an explanation, justification, recommendation, or aspirational aim for the future.

An ACM **guideline** is a document that advises and provides evidence on how an activity or practice should be carried out.

Topic of an ACM position statement or guideline

The topic of an ACM position statement or guideline may arise from clinical practice, or from a contemporary issue which is of interest or concern to midwives, consumers, stakeholders or the wider community. The issue may arise from the ACM strategic plan, or be a topic that midwives are looking to the ACM to provide guidance or leadership on because of perceived confusion or controversy in the public domain.

How are ACM positions statements and guidelines used?

ACM position statements and guidelines are used in a number of ways, which may include:

- Supporting the implementation of change to clinical or work practices and standards;
- Advising on how a particular activity or routine should be carried out;
- Informing the development of policy within the ACM or the wider community;
- As resources or information for stakeholders and the wider community;
- Educating midwifery students;
- Raising the ACM profile, especially in the media; and
- Supporting the ACM marketing and communication strategy.

Who develops a position statement or guideline?

Position statements or guidelines will usually be developed by the relevant advisory committee, working group or experts in a field. For example, statements pertaining to clinical practice may be developed by the Scientific Review Advisory Committee, whereas issues relating to education may be written by the Midwifery Education Advisory Committee. At other times, a process of expression of interest will convene a time-limited working group made up of experts in a particular area. Alternatively, an individual expert in a topic may volunteer to lead the work. On occasion, a position statement or guideline may be developed in partnership with another organisation.

At times, the ACM Board may request that an individual or group with specific interest or expertise in a topic draft a position statement or guideline; at other times, individuals or groups may identify a need for a position statement or guideline on a particular topic to which the ACM will respond.

A position statement will not be published without a process of consultation and ACM Board endorsement.

Writing an ACM position statement or guideline

ACM position statements and guidelines are freely available to all audiences, which include ACM members, midwives and health professionals, consumers, stakeholders and the wider community. Therefore, a position statement or guideline should be written in plain English to be easily understood by all readers.

Position statement

A position statement should contain a brief statement of the salient issues that are clear, straightforward and easy to understand. Depending on the topic, it may also be accompanied by a literature review (which outlines the evidence on which the statement was based), and/or guidance notes.

The position statement should be developed using the ACM template to ensure uniformity in presentation:

- Title. "Position Statement on..."
- Opening statement. The overarching view of the ACM which may include "The Australian College of Midwives supports..."
- Definition/s. If required.
- Key Principles (numbered). A principle is a fundamental idea that is considered true, and contributes to the premise on which the position statement is developed.
- Achieving Best Practice. "To achieve best practice..." – include key points for how the topic is addressed using evidence-based practice.
- Resources to Guide Practice. "The ACM supports the use of the following resources to guide midwives in their practice:" – this should include NMBA/AHPRA regulatory standards, rules and guidelines when relevant.
- References. All references to be documented using the APA 6th Edition reference style: <http://www.apastyle.org>
- Date of Issue.
- Date of Review. Usually three years from date of issue.

Guideline

A guideline should include:

- Title. "ACM XXX Guideline..."
- Opening statement. A description or discussion of the problem, context and background
- Definitions. If required
- Evaluation of evidence. A discussion of the evidence
- Solutions and advice. With an integration of practical stories or examples to demonstrate application of information where appropriate
- Recommendations.
- References. All references to be documented using the APA 6th Edition reference style: <http://www.apastyle.org>
- Date of Issue.
- Date of Review. Usually three years from date of issue.

Procedures

1. Topic for position statement or guideline is identified, and approved by the CEO. If topic is likely to be very controversial or produce risk to the ACM, topic is to be approved by the ACM Board.
2. ACM staff member is identified who will be responsible for leading and monitoring the development of the position statement or guideline.
3. Suitable individuals are identified to assist with the development of the position statement or guideline e.g. staff member, advisory committee, working group or individual expert as appropriate
4. Position statement or guideline is drafted..
5. Draft sent to relevant advisory committee for review, if relevant.
6. Draft position statement or guideline is sent to management committee for review with intent to consult. Information to management committee should include any relevant advice regarding specific stakeholders who should be invited to comment.
7. Management Committee approve position statement or guideline for consultation. If management committee request changes they will be made and brought back to the management committee for further review. This process will continue until approved. If topic is likely to be very controversial or produce risk to the ACM, draft position statement or guideline is to be approved by the ACM Board for consultation.
8. Public Consultation commences.
 - a. The consultation period is generally six weeks.
 - b. Consultation is advertised on ACM web site, e-news and ACM social media. Also sent to ACM advisory committees, Board and Council for comment.
 - c. Draft position statement or guideline sent to specific stakeholders.
 - d. Submissions collected by email or online survey. Submissions may also be collected by post, but an electronic version is preferable.
 - e. Permission is requested from participants to publish their feedback on the ACM website once the position statement or guideline is published. Requested to promote transparency and align the ACM consultation processes with other organisations, such as the NMBA and AHPRA. Participants may also be offered an opportunity to give anonymous feedback.
9. Draft position statement or guideline is revised according to feedback from consultation.
 - a. A record must be kept of all changes made as a result of the consultation process to inform the management committee.
10. Revised position statement or guideline sent to management committee for review.
 - a. Management committee advised on methodology for collecting feedback and results of consultation.
 - b. Management committee advised of changes made, and justification for changes or not, as the case may be.
11. Management approves revised position statement or guideline. If management committee request changes they will be made and brought back to the management committee for further review. This process will continue until approved.
12. Revised position statement or guideline sent to Board for endorsement and permission to publish .
13. The endorsed position statement or guideline is published and disseminated via the ACM website, e-news and social media. Copies may be sent to stakeholders and anyone who requested a copy during the consultation process.
 - a. A copy of the consultation feedback is also published to support process transparency.

14. Position statement or guideline revised in three years, or at times when significant research, evidence or events have the effect of making the current position statement or guideline inaccurate.

Figure 1: Development of ACM Position Statement/Guidelines Process Diagram.

