



California Association of Midwives

Dear CAM member,

CAM is soliciting interested members to participate in an exciting new campaign: The California Birth Trust. The Birth Trust is a fledgling idea that will become a grassroots fund to provide midwifery services to MediCal eligible women.

You may be aware of California midwives' ongoing battle to bill MediCal. The Licensed Midwife Practice Act explicitly states that LMs are to be MediCal providers. Yet 15 years after its passage, we have yet to penetrate the regulatory monolith that is MediCal. Many midwives are distressed by this situation, because we never intended to limit midwifery services to those who can afford to pay. All women, regardless of income, deserve the right to birth in the setting and with the practitioners they choose.

We have been so busy trying to gain the privilege of billing MediCal that we rarely pause to consider what we could expect should we succeed. MediCal reimburses between \$1,100 and \$2,000 per birth, well below the fees of most of the state's midwives. MediCal demands meticulous charting and compliance with all regulations, and it is an incredibly complex system to navigate. Midwives have begun to question whether MediCal billing is worth the effort.

We do not need to wait for permission from the state to provide midwifery care to those families that, because of economic circumstances, may be most in need of the extra compassion, attention and love that midwives bring. We do not need the state to tell us how it should be done.

We can create our own system for providing homebirth access to low income women. Midwives in the Bay Area have invented a working model they call The Birth Bank. Birth Bank recipients pay the midwife 25% of her fee while the midwife agrees to reduce her fee by 25%. The Birth Bank provides the difference. Recipients are asked to repay one half of their loan the following year by holding a midwifery related public education event. Recipients can be linked together to design these fundraisers, building connections among mothers while sustaining the fund and spreading the word about midwifery care.

CAM is just beginning to explore options for the California Birth Trust. It may closely follow the Bay Area model, or it may deviate significantly. As word begins to spread, most midwives are incredibly enthusiastic about this project. It is an opportunity to take back our power, to provide far more women with homebirth access, and to empower our clients as they give back to the community.

We would like to know if this interest and enthusiasm extends across the state. If so, we are on our way to a new era for the California Association of Midwives. We need passionate women to be members of the committee that will define this campaign, create the guidelines for fund distribution and spearhead the fundraising activities. If this idea inspires you, join the committee and help us to manifest this dream.

To be on the California Birth Trust Committee, please contact Jenni Silverstein at (707) 267-5267 or by email at liveoak707@sbcglobal.net.

Sincerely,

The CAM Board

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