

## Midwifery Delivery Services in New Mexico

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The New Mexico State Health Department is one of the official agencies which is endeavoring to improve maternal and child health care by replacing the untrained midwife with the nurse-midwife.

Two public health nurse-midwives have been employed by the New Mexico State Health Department since 1937 for the purpose of instructing and supervising the untrained midwives. There were in 1937, eight hundred midwives in practice in New Mexico and approximately four thousand mothers or twenty-five per cent of the total annual deliveries were by midwives.

Since a definite program of midwife supervision was inaugurated by the New Mexico Health Department, the number of midwives have been greatly decreased. On January 1, of this year, only four hundred fifty-seven midwives were under the supervision of the District Health Officers. Many of this number are now only delivering one or two babies each year.

Santa Fe City mothers were the first group to benefit from a midwifery delivery service. This delivery service was begun by two Medical Mission Sisters in February, 1944. These Sisters arrived in Santa Fe in October, 1943, after having just been graduated from the midwifery course given at Lobenstine Clinic in New York City.

The Santa Fe County Medical Society had approved of the coming of the Sisters and the Archbishop had also pledged his support.

It was fortunate that there already was in the city of Santa Fe, a young woman obstetrician who was eager to assist in the establishment of this type of delivery service.

For several months the Sisters lived and worked at the Catholic Clinic, but in August, 1944, they officially opened the Santa Fe Catholic Maternity Institute. The Institute is housed in a beautiful two-story building, three blocks from the his-

toric Plaza, which is the center of Santa Fe.

The Institute personnel now consists of three sisters who are nurse-midwives, a graduate nurse-midwife, a public health nurse who is also a nun, and a nun who is a dietitian. Nurse-aides who have had the Red Cross Nurse-Aide course assist at each clinic session.

The following figures were obtained from the Santa Fe Catholic Maternity Institute records:

<b>Total registration to date (March 22, 1946)</b> .....	<b>411</b>
<b>Total number of nurse-midwife deliveries</b> .....	<b>290</b>
Antenatal case-load .....	59
Postpartum case-load .....	50
Infants up to one month.....	15
<b>Hospitalizations during 1945</b>	
Antenatal patients .....	4
Intrapartal patients .....	2
Postpartal patients .....	4
Newborns .....	14
Total hospitalizations .....	24
Neonatal deaths in 1945.....	4
Stillbirths .....	3
Abortions .....	1

There were four prematures in 1944 and six in 1945, and only one to date this year. There was one twin delivery this year and four breech deliveries. One mother was delivered by Cæsarean Section of a live infant. An eclamptic patient with convulsions was also hospitalized and delivered of a live infant. Infants when one month old are dismissed to Well-Child Medical Conferences.

The territory covered by the Institute consists of a radius of thirty miles, so besides the city of Santa Fe, ten villages are included.

During 1944, it was necessary for the obstetrician to make fifty-seven home calls to patients being cared for by the nurse-midwives. In 1945, only thirty-one home calls were necessary.

The training of nurse-midwives has also become a function of the Institute. Two public health nurse-midwives were graduated from the Institute last August. The



Institute is affiliated with the Catholic University of America.

Mothers' classes are taught by one of the nurse-midwives at regular intervals. If the mothers attend six consecutive lessons they receive a certificate. Forty-three mothers have received certificates.

In addition to the city midwifery delivery service, New Mexico now has two rural midwifery services. Both services are in Rio Arriba County. This northern New Mexico county contains 5,871 square miles of beautiful, rugged mountain terrain, and a population of 25,352, the majority of whom are Spanish-speaking people. There are nine practicing physicians in the county and sixty-five midwives.

There is an Indian Hospital in the northern part of Rio Arriba County, a small osteopathic hospital, and one church hospital (under the Presbyterian Mission Board) in the southern part of the county.

One midwifery delivery service in Rio Arriba County is also part of a generalized public health program under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Mission Board. The public health nurse-midwife at this Health Center is eighty miles from the nearest doctor, so she does not accept for delivery, patients who have not had a complete physical examination by a physician and have been certified as normal patients. This service has been established for about two and a half years.

The newest rural midwifery delivery service in New Mexico is also in Rio Arriba County. This service began officially on April 18, 1945 and is known as the El Rito — Abiquiu Demonstration.

This project is under the direct supervision of the Maternal and Child Health Division and the Nursing Division of the State Health Department. However, the budget for its operation has been obtained from Children's Bureau.

The El Rito Center consists of two attractive adobe buildings; one is a three room clinic building and the other is a five-room modern house which serves as living quarters for the two nurse-midwives.

The Abiquiu Health Center, sixteen miles from El Rito, is a three room clinic building. Another clinic has been opened in La Madera, another village, thirteen miles from El Rito. Just last month, interested fathers from the little village of Coyote came to one of the nurse-midwives begging for a similar center in their isolated village.

Since the opening of the El Rito Abiquiu Demonstration, three nurse-midwives have been there six, seven and five months respectively, and they have travelled a distance of 8,994 miles.

The following figures were obtained from the El Rito and Abiquiu records:

Total number of families in area.....	264
Total number of villages.....	10
Total number of patients registered from	
April 18, 1945 to December 31, 1945.....	64
Total number of deliveries.....	55
Delivered by Certified Nurse-Midwives...	25
Delivered by native midwives.....	17
Delivered by physicians called by	
Certified Nurse-midwife.....	3
Delivered by other physicians.....	4
Delivered by Osteopathic physician.....	1
OTHER:	
Delivered by self.....	2
Delivered by relative.....	1
Abortion .....	1
Moved to another state.....	1
Number not delivered.....	5
Hospitalizations:	
Premature — stillborn.....	1
Transverse .....	1
Placenta previa .....	1
Number of infant deaths*.....	7
Number of neonatal deaths.....	0
Stillbirths .....	1

\*Diarrhea was the cause of five deaths. The other infants were not seen by a doctor and the cause of death had to be classified as "Unknown."

Since January 1, 1946 a total of seventeen (17) obstetrical patients have registered and two (2) have delivered.

The same obstetrician who is on the Institute staff holds two monthly clinics in El Rito and Abiquiu. The nurse-midwives hold weekly Midwifery Clinics and Nursing Conferences at each of the Centers.

The public health nurse-midwives in this area give a family service, but they are not required to visit cases of communicable disease.

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In addition to the obstetrical clinics, a pediatrician comes to each Center once a month to examine children from one month to eight years of age. Two hundred ninety children have had the benefit of this clinic service.

Babies delivered by the nurse-midwives attend a special monthly medical conference held by the Director of the Maternal and Child Health Division of the State Health Department.

The mothers are extremely regular in attendance at this conference and most of the babies are entirely breast fed.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the El Rito and Abiquiu Health Centers' activities has been the interest and participation of the lay group and the assistance they have rendered the nurse-midwives. Everyone has helped, the priests, the teachers, the ranchers, the postmaster, the merchants, the forest rangers, the grandparents and even the teen-agers. All of the equipment for the Abiquiu Clinic was unpacked and placed by a group of young people, the oldest being twenty and the youngest ten.

The major problem in the El Rito — Abiquiu Demonstration area is keeping an adequate staff. The supply of nurse-midwives in the United States is still so limited at the present time that staff replacements are not quickly found. The strange behavior of the rural telephone is a minor problem and many villages in New Mexico do not have a phone of any description.

Although the obstetrician for the El Rito and Abiquiu Health Centers is in Santa Fe, fifty-six miles away, she has been available for every emergency.

The New Mexico State Health Department has faith in the nurse-midwife and believes that she should have legal protection. In August 4, 1945, the Director of the New Mexico State Health Department presented to the State Board of Health, Nurse-Midwife Regulations which were approved and passed by the Board.

*The two booklets*

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