

**[DOH ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2007-0039,
November 28, 2007]**

REGULATION OF BIRTHING HOMES

I. Background/Rationale

One of the challenges that the Department of Health (DOH) currently faces is the achievement of the Millennium Development Health Goals (Health MDGs) by 2015. One of the Health MDGs is to improve maternal health, specifically, to reduce maternal mortality ratio by two-thirds.

To achieve the goal of maternal mortality reduction, a new strategy has been adopted by the DOH for implementation under the Formula One for Health (F1) reform initiatives. This strategy is based on a new world view that considers all pregnant women to be at risk for complications and therefore needing easy access to both basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric care. This strategy calls for deliveries that are conducted in primary-level facilities (i.e. health centers), to be backed up by access to referral-level facilities. Part of this strategy is ensuring that these health facilities are compliant with DOH licensure and Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC) accreditation standards.

At present, the DOH, through the Bureau of Health Facilities and Service (BHFS), issues licenses to all birthing home facilities, whether they are government-owned or privately owned facilities. The mandate to regulate birthing homes comes from provisions in Republic Act 4226 "Hospitals Licensure Act" and its revised implementing rules and regulations (Administrative Orders Nos. 147 s. 2004 and No. 2005-0029.) On the other hand, PHIC grants accreditation to birthing homes for reimbursement for maternity services being availed of by PHIC members.

Stakeholders from both private and public sectors representing birthing home owners, administrators and health workers, clamor for a simplification of the regulatory processes for birthing homes. In particular, they advocate for a unification of the licensing and accreditation processes and standards. In response to this clamor from stakeholders, it is proposed that in lieu of the license to operate that is issued by BHFS, birthing homes shall seek accreditation from PHIC. The preference for accreditation over licensing recognizes the fact that accreditation promotes higher standards of quality in health care. Furthermore, the proposal is in accordance with ongoing reforms in health regulation under the Formula One for Health, particularly with the harmonization and streamlining of regulatory systems and processes.

II. Objective

This Order sets the guidelines for the regulation of birthing homes.