

# Vermont Freestanding Birth Centers: A brief overview

## What is a Freestanding Birth Center?

A birth center is an outpatient healthcare facility designed to follow the midwifery model of care. Birth centers provide care for healthy people before, during, and after normal pregnancy. A birth center may also offer gynecological care, infant care, and family planning.



As of 2017, there are 345 birth centers in 37 states plus DC, which represents a growth of 76% since 2010. Freestanding birth centers are recognized by statute, legislation, or Medicaid in 41 states.

## Birth Centers Are Safe and Cost Effective

Numerous studies and meta-analyses have shown that having a baby with a midwife in a birth center is at least as safe as having a baby in a hospital for low risk birthing families, while conferring a radically lower risk of needing medical interventions, having perineal trauma, experiencing preterm birth or needing a cesarean section. **In fact, the cesarean section rate for women choosing birth centers is, at minimum 4 times lower than for women who choose hospital births.** Care by midwives in birth centers is also exceptionally affordable to the health care system. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimate that savings exceed \$2,000 per mother/infant pair when birthing parents choose a birth center.

## Pass H.859: Licensure of Freestanding Birth Centers

Support safe, family-centered, and cost-effective reproductive health care in Vermont.