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Midwife Pleads Guilty to Practicing Medicine Without a License
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Jennifer Williams, a Shelbyville, Ind., midwife, pleaded guilty in June 2006 to practicing midwifery without a license, the *AP/Louisville Courier-Journal* reports (*AP/Louisville Courier-Journal*, 6/16). Williams in June 2005 conducted the home birth of an infant who died. Williams faced charges of practicing medicine and midwifery without a license but did not face criminal charges of causing or contributing to the infant's death. Indiana prohibits the practice of midwifery by individuals other than licensed doctors or nurses with specialized training in obstetrics (*Kaiser Daily Women's Health Policy Report*, 5/25). Williams will serve one year on probation and, upon completion, could petition to have the felony conviction changed to a misdemeanor, Shelby County prosecutor Kent Apsley said. Williams will not be allowed to practice medicine or midwifery during the probation, Apsley added. "It is my hope that my case will illuminate the problems with the archaic midwifery laws in Indiana," Williams said, adding that she will spend time supporting attempts to revise the state's midwifery laws. According to Mary Ayres, president of the Indiana Midwives Association, Williams' case will allow Indiana to focus on removing laws that are "nonsensical and don't promote anyone's safety" (*AP/Louisville Courier-Journal*, 6/16).

The state of Indiana, along with nine other states, prohibits the practice of midwifery by non-licensed doctors and nurses. This case is part of an examination by *The New York Times* of whether the practice of midwifery by non-licensed doctors and nurses pose significant medical risks. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that 99 percent of all births occur in hospitals. Nurse midwives assist about eight percent of these births. According to the Midwives Alliance of North America, there are approximately 3,000 practicing midwives without formal medical training and about 1,100 are certified by the North American Registry of Midwives, which is a private agency recognized by 20 states. Kevin Burke, president of the Indiana State Medical Association, told *The Times* the hospital is the best place for labor and delivery because, "routine things sometimes become very un-routine." Annually, Indiana has about 1,000 home births. Reproductive Justice means determining your own birth options.