

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR DONA INTERNATIONAL BIRTH DOULA CERTIFICATION**

### **1. Verify that you are a current member of DONA International.**

- Your membership date is printed on your mailing label of the *International Doula*.
- Membership fees are payable on-line at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org) or by contacting the DONA International Home Office at [info@DONA.org](mailto:info@DONA.org). Include a copy of your e-mail receipt of paid membership with your application.
- Your application cannot be reviewed if membership is not current.

### **2. Pay your Certification Application Processing Fee**

- Enclose the processing fee in U.S. funds; check or money order payable to **DONA International** along with your completed application for certification.
- Processing fees are based on the International Fee Group Index according to country of residence. Current fees are found at the International Fee Group Index at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org), e-mail [info@DONA.org](mailto:info@DONA.org) or call (888) 788-DONA (3662).
- The processing fee may be paid on-line at the DONA Boutique, [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org). Include a copy of your e-mail receipt of the paid processing fee with your application.

### **3. Read five (5) books from the DONA Required Reading List and the DONA International Birth Doula Position Paper.**

- A minimum of five books must be read for certification, in addition to the *DONA International Position Paper: The Birth Doula's Contribution to Modern Maternity Care*. A copy of the DONA International Position Paper is found in your membership packet as well as on-line at [http://www.dona.org/publications/position\\_paper\\_birth.php](http://www.dona.org/publications/position_paper_birth.php).
- After completion of required reading, include the completed Required Reading List and Statement of Completion form with your application.

### **4. Complete the Basic Knowledge Self Assessment Tool.**

- Include the completed Basic Knowledge Self Assessment Tool with your application.

### **5. Complete ONE (1) of the following options (A, B, C or D):**

#### **A. Training in childbirth education or midwifery**

- Enclose a copy of your certificate or a letter verifying your training in childbirth education or midwifery.

- Recognized childbirth educator organizations include, but are not limited to, the International Childbirth Education Association, Lamaze International, American Academy of Husband Coached Childbirth and Birth Works. For a complete list of approved organizations that meet this requirement, visit the DONA International web site at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org).
- Documentation from local certifying organizations (which describe course work and completion by applicant) may also be accepted.
- HypnoBirthing does not qualify.

**B. Provide evidence of experience in labor and delivery as a licensed practical or registered nurse**

- Submit a letter of reference on hospital letterhead verifying work experience with your application.

**C. Observe a Childbirth Preparation series of 12 hours minimum (not as an expectant parent)**

- The observed childbirth education series must be taught by an educator certified through Lamaze, Bradley, Birth Works, ICEA, ACBE, Hypnobabies, CBI or ALACE. To view the most updated list of approved childbirth education organizations, please visit [http://www.dona.org/develop/birth\\_cert.php](http://www.dona.org/develop/birth_cert.php) or contact the Home Office.
- HypnoBirthing does not qualify because it omits important topics in the curriculum such as medical interventions, cesarean birth, postpartum adjustment, recovery and more.
- Exceptions may be made for candidates who do not have any of the above certified educators within 30 miles. (Contact the Home Office at [info@DONA.org](mailto:info@DONA.org) for assistance.)
- If the observed series is not 12 hours in length, you may supplement the series by providing documentation of attendance at a pregnancy, breastfeeding or postpartum-related course, for example a VBAC or refresher course.
- Please complete the Childbirth Class Observation Form and include an outline of the series with your application.

**D. Attend an Introduction to Childbirth for Doulas of seven (7) hours minimum in length**

- This course is offered in conjunction with a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop and must be taught by a DONA Approved Trainer.
- Please include a copy of your certificate of attendance at this course with your application.
- This course is an alternative to observing the 12 hour childbirth education series.

**6. Verify completion of a Breastfeeding Requirement. Submit required documentation with completed certification application. Choose one (1):**

- Proof of completion of lactation consultant, breastfeeding peer counselor or community breastfeeding educator training.
- Proof of completion of an on-line lactation study program. Options include: [http://www.leron-line.com/Basic\\_Lactation\\_Management.htm](http://www.leron-line.com/Basic_Lactation_Management.htm) and <http://www.breastfeedingbasics.org/>.

- Proof of participation in a breastfeeding class or workshop:  
Submit a class outline and signed Breastfeeding Class Observation Form (included in this packet) as documentation of attendance at a three hour (minimum) breastfeeding class taught by an educator with recognized breastfeeding credentials (IBCLC, CLE or CLC).

**7. Attend a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop of 16 or more hours in length.**

- Certification must be completed within four years of the doula's attendance at a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop. This is regardless of the expiration date stamped on this Birth Doula Certification Packet.
- A copy of your certificate of attendance/completion of a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop must accompany your application.
- To verify that the workshop you have attended has been approved by DONA International, contact the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or e-mail Education@DONA.org.

**8. Submit Client and Care Provider Evaluations (A, B and C):**

**A. Include three evaluations from mothers to whom you have provided labor support.**

**B. Include three evaluations from primary care providers (physician or midwife).**

**C. For each physician evaluation, a nurse's evaluation must also be submitted.**

- Evaluations must be from births that occurred after attending a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop and purchasing the Birth Doula Certification Packet.
- Only good evaluations will be accepted for certification (3s or higher).
- Evaluations mailed separately to the DONA International Home Office by the client/provider will not be accepted.
- Evaluation forms included in this packet may be duplicated.
- Evaluations do not have to come from the same births for which the doula submits Birth Record Sheets and Birth Essays.
- It is preferred, though not required, to have evaluations completed by different care providers.
- Evaluations from fathers or other family members will not be accepted.

**9. Document at least three (3) births (must include components A, B, and C from every birth):**

**A. Client Confidentiality Release Form**

- The doula is required to obtain a signature from each client on this form so that the confidential information contained in the Birth Record Sheet may be reviewed for certification purposes.
- The mother's signature is the only acceptable signature on this form.

## **B. Birth Record Sheets (including Client Profile, Labor and Birth, Progress Chart, Medical Interventions, Baby Information)**

- All forms must be completed by the doula, including vaginal exams and all labor and birth information in the labor progress chart.
- The forms in this packet may be duplicated.

## **C. Birth Essay**

- Each Birth Record Sheet must include a 500-700 word essay, not to exceed two typewritten pages, 12 point font and normal margins.
- The essay must include the following information (approximately one paragraph for each):
  1. *Brief description of labor*
  2. *Your role as the doula*
  3. *Description of the mother's emotional reaction to labor, birth and early postpartum*
  4. *What you learned from the experience*
- Attach each essay to the corresponding Birth Record Sheets.
- A sample essay is included in this packet.

### **Additional Information Regarding Experiential Training:**

- Labor support **must** begin before or at the onset of the active phase of labor. To clarify, active labor will be considered **four (4) centimeters** in dilation.
- All births submitted with your application must occur after attending a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop and purchase of a Birth Doula Certification Packet.
- The doula submitting the birth must be the PRIMARY doula at the birth.
- The number of labor support hours for all three births must total 15 hours (minimum).
- The doula may include all of hours of **labor support** as well as up to **one hour** of immediate postpartum assistance for each birth submitted.
- The doula may need to attend more than three births in order to meet all requirements.
- The doula's presence must be continuous for every birth submitted.
- The doula is required to provide immediate postpartum support for each submitted birth.

Cesarean births may account for only one of the three birth experiences. If an elective/scheduled cesarean birth is submitted, the doula must complete a Birth Record Sheet, Client Profile and Birth Essay . In addition, the Birth Essay must include documentation of the following:

1. *Prenatal contact*
2. *Your presence at the birth*
3. *Immediate postpartum support*
4. *Postpartum contact*

**10. Develop and submit a resource list that includes at least 45 resources from at least 30 different categories. Please be sure to check all listings for accuracy.**

**11. Write an essay (500-1000 words) on The Purpose and Value of Labor Support**

- The essay must be typed and double spaced.
- The Purpose and Value of Labor Support Essay should include:
  - a. The benefits of labor support to the mother and her family*
  - b. The purpose behind providing labor support*
  - c. The doula's responsibilities*
  - d. The doula's role*
- The essay will not be accepted if the doula only addresses her personal reasons for becoming a doula.
- The DONA International Birth Doula Position Paper, Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics should be referenced when writing this essay. Please include the benefits of doula care, as shown by current research.

**12. Sign the DONA International (a) Code of Ethics and (b) Standards of Practice forms.**

- Your signature on the forms testifies that you will abide by the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice as set forth by DONA International.
- Return signed copies of each form with your application.
- Please retain the remaining copies for your records.

**13. Provide two (2) Character References on the Application Form included in this packet:**

- Include current contact information (name, phone and relationship) from one personal and one professional reference.
- The applicant's references will be checked by the Certification Committee.

**14. Optional: Typed, double spaced essay on "Why I Became a Doula."**

**Please save a copy of all the materials that you send to DONA International.**

**Mailing Instructions:**

**Mail your completed application materials and Certification Processing Fee in U.S. funds or enclose a copy of your receipt for payment of your fees on-line at the DONA Boutique, to:**

**DONA Certification Chair  
1582 S. Parker Rd., Ste. 201, Denver, CO 80231**

- Please do NOT send your completed packet using a mail service that requires a signature from the DONA International Home Office.
- If you send your packet via another mail carrier, please send it to 1582 S. Parker Rd., Ste. 201, Denver, CO 80231.
- To be notified that your application has been received, please include a self-addressed stamped postcard.
- Do not include the binder your materials arrived in or place materials in any other type of binder or folder for mailing.

- Allow two months for processing your application. Please contact the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or Certification@DONA.org if you have not received notification after two months.

### **Problems with materials submitted for certification:**

- Applicant will be notified by e-mail, phone or letter if there are concerns with the application.
- Applicant may be asked to submit additional materials.
- Applicant is expected to act in a polite and professional manner when discussing concerns with the Certification Committee.

### **Denial of certification:**

- Certification may be denied to an applicant who falsifies information, does not complete all requirements or does not adhere to DONA International's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. Certification may be denied at the discretion of the Certification Committee.

### **Refund Policies:**

- No refund will be provided for membership fees, certification packets or certification fees if certification is denied or the applicant withdraws during the application process.

### **Extensions:**

- One extension of six (6) months may be purchased for \$10 in the DONA Boutique at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org) or by contacting the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662).

### **Replacement fee:**

- A \$15 fee will be charged for a one-time replacement of this Birth Doula Certification Packet.

### **Orders placed via the DONA International Home Office:**

- Orders placed by phoning the DONA International Home Office are processed on-line through the DONA Boutique. If you prefer not to place your credit card information on-line, please mail a check for your purchase to 1582 S. Parker Rd., Ste. 201, Denver, CO 80231.

### **Forms in languages other than English:**

- Please contact the DONA International Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or e-mail Certification@DONA.org if you are interested in receiving certification materials in languages other than English.

### **Oral Interviews:**

- For applicants who are unable to write, an oral interview may be used for certification. Please call the DONA International Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or e-mail Certification@DONA.org to make arrangements.

# SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR BIRTH ESSAYS

## I. Paragraph One: *Brief* Description of Labor

Sally called me at approximately 4 am on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Her contractions were about 7 minutes apart lasting 45 seconds. She decided that she was fine and would call back when she needed me, or in a few hours. At 7 am, Sally called and said she would like to go the hospital and asked me to meet them there. I arrived at 7:30. By 10 am, she was feeling her contractions mainly in her back, but seemed to be coping well. At 11:30, Sally's physician offered an epidural. Sally chose not to utilize an epidural at this point in her labor, but wanted to keep her options for pain control open. We tried a variety of coping techniques throughout the rest of the afternoon. At 5:25 pm, Sally was completely dilated and began to push. At 7:13 pm, a baby boy was born. The baby was placed directly on Sally's chest and began to nurse heartily within 30 minutes.

## II. Paragraph Two: Your Role as the Doula

My role at this birth was to help Sally's husband with a variety of suggestions. I taught him to do counter pressure and the double hip squeeze. We would often switch off, as it was tiring. I also suggested different coping techniques and position changes such as the shower, hands and knees, walking and the birth ball. Sally really enjoyed the shower and she used it many times. Since Sally had wanted to avoid pain medications, my role was to remind her of that and encourage her that she was doing well. When the physician offered the epidural, I reminded Sally and Bob that they could take a few minutes to think about it. Sally and Bob worked very well together, so I often found that my role was more of guidance than performance.

## III. Paragraph Three: Mother's Reaction to Labor and Birth

When I initially arrived at the hospital, Sally was focusing during contractions, but still chatty and excited between. As her contractions intensified and moved into her back, she was a bit surprised. I think it helped her when I talked a bit about the cause of back labor. She later stated that it really caught her off guard. After beginning counter pressure, Sally resumed a nice ritual in her labor. She was internally focused, but I believe coping well. We hit another bump in the road as she approached transition. She was feeling panicked as she began to have an urge to push with her contractions. I think that it helped to have Bob get "eye to eye" and help her keep her breathing regular. She pushed like a pro and kept an upbeat attitude the entire time. Overall, Sally was thrilled at the way the birth went. She was quite pleased that she was able to avoid using pain medications. At our prenatal, she was concerned that she would not be able to "make it" without pain meds. At the postpartum visit, Bob stated that he was glad that I was there. He joked that there was no way he would have remembered everything that he had learned in childbirth class and that it was a "godsend" that there was someone there to remind him! Sally did mention that she felt that she could have used more help from both the nurse and me about getting the baby latched on. Overall, I think that Sally is happy with how the birth went and proud of herself and how she handled it.

## IV. Paragraph Four: What You Learned as the Doula

I think the biggest thing that I learned was that counter pressure works really well! I had not had a client with back labor before and had not tried counter pressure yet. It was amazing to see how much Sally needed it with every contraction! I also learned that my role at each birth was going to be different. I really took more of a "back seat" at this labor than at any other that I ever attended. I learned that to be an effective doula, I do not have to be the woman's sole supporter. I learned that I could be present to *facilitate* others helping her. Another thing I saw was that it really can help to remind the couple that "taking a few minutes" to make a decision can give them the emotional space to make the best decision for them. I also realize that I need to get more breastfeeding education under my belt so I can better help my clients!

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Your essays do not have to follow the above format. They do, however; have to include the four elements listed above:

- ✓ Brief description of labor
- ✓ Your role as the doula
- ✓ Mother's reaction to the birth
- ✓ What you learned

The above layout is simply a suggested method of formatting your essays.