

Recommended Timeline for Birth Doula Certification

This timeline can help you stay organized as you complete all of the certification requirements within the four (4) year time frame required by DONA International.

Step One – Required Reading

Cost – \$75-100

Many doulas begin reading as their first step to determine if being a doula is the path they wish to continue. Books such as **Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn (Simkin, Whalley and Keppler)** and **The Doula Book (Klaus, Kennell and Klaus)** are excellent publications to get you started in your career as a doula. Continue the required reading throughout your certification process until you complete all five books. Find a complete required reading list at <http://www.dona.org/PDF/5RequiredReadingList--8-21-08.pdf>.

Step Two – Become a Member of DONA International

Cost¹ – \$50 for 1 year;

\$85 for 2 years;

\$125 for 3 years

Even though you are not required to become a member of DONA International until you apply for certification, membership provides a number of benefits including a subscription to the *International Doula* quarterly magazine and our on-line newsletter, the *eDoula*, and discounts on both certification packets and conference fees. Continuous membership in DONA International is also required to maintain your certification.

Step Three – Purchase a Birth Doula Certification Packet

Cost – \$35 for members;

\$45 for non-members

It is a good idea to purchase your birth doula certification packet right around the same time that you attend the childbirth series and the DONA approved birth doula workshop. The birth doula certification packet contains the forms you will need, such as the breastfeeding class form and childbirth education observation form. Each certification packet **expires within two (2) years of purchase** so doulas will need to purchase a new packet if they do not submit their application within two (2) years of purchase. You must purchase your packet prior to attending any births you plan to submit for certification.

Step Four – Attend a Childbirth Education Series (taught by an educator certified by one of the approved organizations) Cost – Approx. \$100

One of the components to certification is to attend a twelve (12) hour childbirth education series as an observer, not as a participant. You can find the DONA International list of approved childbirth organizations at www.dona.org under Birth Doula Certification. The form you need for this requirement can be found in the birth doula certification packet. If you are either a labor and delivery nurse or you have completed training as a childbirth educator through one of our approved organizations, you can supply a certificate of completion or a letter verifying your nursing experience to meet this requirement.

While you may take this course at any time, many doulas find it helpful to complete this observation prior to attending the birth doula workshop.

Another option is to attend a seven (7) hour Introduction to Childbirth for Doulas that is offered by a DONA approved trainer in conjunction with a birth doula workshop.

Step Five – Attend a DONA approved Birth Doula Workshop Cost – Approx. \$200-400

One of the most important aspects of certification is to complete the sixteen (16) hour birth doula workshop. The cost varies depending on the location of the workshop and what is included in the workshop (meals, lodging, materials, etc). For a listing of workshops closest to you, visit http://www.dona.org/develop/find_a_workshop.php.

You must complete the workshop prior to attending the births you wish to submit for certification. You will have **four (4) years from the date of your workshop** to complete all of your certification requirements and submit your application.

Step Six – Attend Births Required for Certification Cost – None-Expenses

Any time within four (4) years after completion of the birth doula workshop and purchase of your birth doula certification packet, you may begin attending births. You will need to fill out several forms that are included in your birth doula certification packet for each birth you submit, including a birth record, labor progress chart and client confidentiality release statement. For each birth, you will need to write an essay following the guidelines indicated in your packet. Each submitted birth will require an evaluation from the mother and primary care provider. If the primary care provider is a doctor, an additional nurse's evaluation is required.

Because each birth must meet a number of requirements (such as continuous support and the doula's presence at the onset of active labor) you may actually need to attend five to six (5-6)

births or more in order to have the minimum of three (3) that meet all of the necessary requirements.

While there are no direct costs to the doula to attend births, you may have expenses such as parking, child care and gas.

Step Seven – Attend a Breastfeeding Class

Cost – Approx. \$40 or free

You may complete the breastfeeding course requirement at any point within the four (4) year time frame. The form you will need to complete can be found in your birth doula certification packet. Several options to meet this requirement include attending a breastfeeding class taught by an instructor with a recognized breastfeeding credential that is three (3) hours in length or taking an on-line breastfeeding course. Most classes will charge a small fee to observe.

Step Eight – Complete a Resource List

Cost – None

Your resource list serves as a helpful tool when making referrals to other professionals in your community. It is a good idea to begin compiling names and phone numbers throughout your certification process since you will need to submit at least 45 resources.

Step Nine – Write a 500-1,000 Word Essay on the Purpose and Value of Labor Support

Cost – None

This requirement can be done whenever you prefer in the four (4) year time frame of certification. Some doulas may choose to write it as soon as they complete the workshop while their understanding of the role of the doula is fresh. Others may choose to write it as the last step before submitting their application.

Step Ten – Complete the Basic Knowledge Self-Assessment Tool

Cost — None

You may prefer to take this test after you have completed the birth doula workshop and the recommended reading since all of the questions pertain to childbirth and the role of the doula.

Step Eleven – Provide Two Character References**Cost – None**

One personal and one professional reference (including name, e-mail and phone number) must be provided on your application form for certification.

Step Twelve – Sign DONA International’s Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics**Cost – None**

Both of these forms are included in your birth doula certification packet. Your signature indicates that you will abide by DONA International’s Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics in your role as a DONA certified birth doula.

Step Thirteen – Pay Your Certification Processing Fee**Cost¹ – \$60**

In order to process your application for certification, you must include a check for \$60 with your application. You may also pay this processing fee on-line at the DONA Boutique at http://www.dona.org/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=SFNT&Store_Code=DBhttp://www.dona.org/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=SFNT&Store_Code=DB.

Do not forget to make a copy of all of your paperwork before you send in your completed application in the event that it is lost or damaged during shipping!

Be sure to look over a list of birth doula certification requirements on-line at http://www.dona.org/develop/birth_cert.php.

¹ DONA International fees are based on the International Fee Group Index according to country of residence. For current fees in countries other than the U.S., check the International Fee Group Index in the DONA Boutique at www.DONA.org or call the Home Office at 888-788-DONA (3662). All fees are payable in U.S. funds only.