



The Premier Doula Organization

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BIRTH DOULAS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The value of providing laboring women with continuous emotional support, physical comfort, and encouragement has been recognized worldwide.

Given the clear benefits and no known risks associated with intrapartum support, every effort should be made to ensure all labouring women receive support, not only from those close to them but also from specially trained caregivers. This support should include continuous presence, the provision of hands-on comfort, and encouragement. **Hodnett, E.D. "Support from caregivers during childbirth" (Cochrane Review) in Cochrane Library, Issue 2. Oxford Update Software, 1998. Updated Quarterly.**

A doula provides support consisting of praise, reassurance, measures to improve the comfort of the mother, physical contact such as rubbing the mother's back and holding her hands, explanation of what is going on during labour and delivery and a constant friendly presence. Such tasks can also be fulfilled by a nurse or midwife, but they often need to perform technical/medical procedures that can distract their attention from the mother. **Care in Normal Birth: a Practical Guide. Report of a Technical Working Group. World Health Organization, 1996.**

Facing unprecedented pressures to reduce expenses, many hospitals are targeting the largest single budget item—labor costs... (An) unintended consequence of nursing cutbacks may be an increased cesarean rate; the inability of pared down nursing staff to provide continuous coverage to laboring mothers (has been) shown to increase the chance of a cesarean...Doulas clearly improve clinical and service quality; they provide an absolutely safe way to reduce cesareans and other invasive birthing interventions. **Coming to Term: Innovations in Safely Reducing Cesarean Rates. Medical Leadership Council, Washington D.C. 1996**

Professionals have paid much attention to innovative technology and the many new options for monitoring and managing labor. While the technology is important, it can become so prominent that clinicians ignore both the natural aspects of labor and the non-technical needs of women in labor... Changes that support the patient in labor and reinforce the natural, physiologic process.... Includes providing one-to-one psychological support for patients using nursing staff or doulas. **Reducing the Cesarean Section Rates while Maintaining Maternal and Infant Outcomes. Bruce L. Flamm et al. Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Boston, 1997**

The continuous availability of a caregiver to provide psychological support and comfort should be a key component of all intrapartum care programs, which should be designed for the effective prevention, and treatment of dystocia (non-progressive labor). **Guidelines on Dystocia. Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, 1995.**



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Questions to Ask a Prospective Birth Doula

The following questions will help you decide if a particular doula is right for you. You may consider asking these questions on the phone, before having an in-person interview.

- What training have you had? (If a doula is certified you may consider checking with the certifying organization.)
- What is your philosophy about childbirth and supporting women and their partners through labor?
- When do you try to join women in labor? Do you come to our home or do you meet us at the place of birth?
- May we meet with you to discuss our birth plans and the role you will play in supporting me (us) through childbirth?
- May we call you with questions or concerns before or after the birth?
- Do you meet with me (us) after the birth to review the labor and answer questions?
- Do you work with one or more backup doulas for times when you are not available? May we meet her/them?
- What is your fee, what does it include, and what are your refund policies?
- Can you provide references? (Be sure to check the references.)

When you meet the doula (and it is a good idea for both of you and your partner to meet her), pay particular attention to your personal perceptions of the doula. Is she kind, warm, enthusiastic? Is she knowledgeable? Does she communicate well? Is she a good listener? Is she comfortable with your choices or does she seem to have her own agenda? Do you feel comfortable with her? The way you feel with her may be more important than the number of births she has attended. You may want to interview more than one doula and make a comparison to help you find the doula who is right for you.