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## **New leadership at DONA International will work to increase access to doula services**

New leadership at DONA International, the world's leading doula organization, aims to increase access to doula services by promoting third party reimbursement and making "doula" a household word.

Doulas are professionals who provide advocacy and emotional, physical and informational support to women and childbearing families before and during birth, and during the postpartum period.

"Doulas make a beneficial impact on the wellbeing of mothers and infants. When insurers realize that paying for doula support will ultimately save money, they will cover these services," says new DONA International President Debbie Young of Lowden, Iowa.

During her two-year term, Young will serve as the leading spokesperson for DONA International, which now has more than 6,500 members in 24 countries. As a doula trainer for 13 years, Young has worked to improve access to doula support by growing the profession through her role as a doula trainer. "Now I have the opportunity to pursue improving access to doulas on a grander scale," says Young.

Young steps into the top leadership role of the world's oldest and largest doula association at a time when the doula profession and the demand for doula services are growing significantly. In recent years, the word "doula" has appeared in standard dictionaries and doulas have been covered by the major news outlets. Doulas have even entered into the storylines of popular television shows, including the Gilmore Girls and Frasier. "And now there is a major motion picture about doulas in the works," Young adds.

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Young is a practicing birth and postpartum doula and a certified childbirth educator, as well as a doula trainer. She has also authored many articles on birth and early parenting issues and is a frequent presenter nationwide.

Young is the owner of BabyMatters, a company that provides education, information and doula support to expecting and new families. She is currently pursuing a master's degree from the University of Iowa in Community and Behavioral Health. She has a bachelor's degree in Health Promotion: Women's Health.

Also beginning two-year terms with DONA International are Susan Toffolon of Jacksonville, Florida, as President-Elect and Brenda Lane of Arnold, Maryland, as Director of Certification. Toffolon, an accountant, has served DONA International as treasurer since 2001. "I am honored and excited to serve in this new role," says Toffolon. "It is an amazing opportunity to be part of this organization."

Toffolon has been a doula for 16 years, a certified childbirth educator for 15 years and a DONA International certified birth doula and trainer for 13 years. She received her DONA International training from one of the organization's founders, reknown author, childbirth educator and doula Penny Simkin.

Toffolon has just completed a year of service in Americorps and has been hired as the operations manager for Grace and Truth Community Development Corporation. She is completing a master's degree in Cultural Anthropology from Kent State University and has a bachelor's degree in Health Care Administration from Ursuline College.

Brenda Lane is moving to the Director of Certification after serving as DONA International's Northeastern US Director. "Our certification is widely recognized," says Lane. "We have recently raised our requirements for certification. Now with the bar even higher, it is exciting to be implementing these new standards." Lane notes that DONA International is also increasing its capacity to provide certification, as the number of members and those seeking certification continues to grow rapidly.

Lane has been a childbirth educator for 16 years, a doula for 12 years and a doula trainer for 8 years. She serves as the feature writer on pregnancy and childbirth for [www.suite101.com](http://www.suite101.com). Lane has a bachelor's degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology from State University of New York at Geneseo.