

1. How would I know if the workshop I am taking is DONA International approved?

Find DONA International approved workshops through our online locator at [Find a DONA International Doula workshop](#).

2. Do I have to be a member of DONA International to order my Certification Packet?

No, but DONA International members receive a discount. You must be a member at the time you submit your packet for review in order to become certified, and later to maintain your certification.

3. I noticed that some training workshops also offer an “Intro.” To be certified as a birth doula, am I required to attend an Introduction to Childbirth for Doulas (Intro) along with the doula workshop?

A DONA International approved introductory class is a one (1) day class that satisfies the childbirth education requirement for birth doula certification. It is not a requirement to attend an Intro along with the birth doula workshop, but the Intro is one of the ways to satisfy the childbirth education requirement. It is highly recommended that you attend it if there are no, or very limited options for, childbirth classes for expectant parents offered in your area.

4. How many hours of training in a DONA International approved workshop do I need for certification?

A DONA International approved birth doula workshop will be at least 16 hours of instruction time, and it may be longer. You will need to attend the entire workshop in order to receive a certificate of attendance and to be able to use it for your certification application.

5. How many hours do I need to observe a childbirth education series?

You will need to observe an entire series of in-person childbirth classes taught to a group of expectant parents. You will want to look for a comprehensive series, if possible, which may be 12 hours or more of instruction time. Refer to your certification packet for details.

6. For the requirement to observe a childbirth education series, do classes offered by hospitals to prepare expectant parents for birth qualify?

They will meet the requirement unless you are attending as an expectant parent and also a participant, rather than an observer.

7. I have attended a childbirth education training workshop. I would like to know if this training is sufficient for the childbirth education component of the requirements to become a doula.

The workshop you attended would meet the DONA International childbirth education requirement for certification if you can provide a copy of your certificate and an outline of the coursework, and you are currently active as an instructor or retired within three years of submitting your application.

8. I am nervous about attending births by myself. May I take a doula buddy with me?

It can be a wonderful opportunity to gain some experience and confidence to attend your very first births with another doula, for example, a doula who attended the same workshop as you did. You could also see if you can shadow and observe a DONA certified doula as s/he works with a client during a labor and birth. These can be wonderful learning opportunities. However, you will not be able to submit such births for certification. You must have been the primary doula providing all the labor support to your client and any family in the experiences you submit with your application.

9. How do I order a certification packet?

Visit the [DONA International Boutique](#). You will need to register as a user to be able to make a purchase of your packet.

10. I am having trouble finding clients and attending births to complete the certification. What can I do?

Don't be discouraged if your business gets off to a slow start. As you gather information for your list of resources, network with other doulas, perinatal professionals and alternative and complementary care providers in your area and use that opportunity to introduce yourself and let them know the services you offer. Getting your name out there can be hard at first, but it is well worth the effort as you begin to see positive results.

11. How long does a candidate have to complete the certification requirements?

You have two years from the date you purchase your certification packet to submit your application for certification. If your packet expires, you may purchase a one-time, six-month extension for \$10. After the six-month extension, if you still did not complete the requirements, you will have to purchase another certification packet and then meet the requirements in the second packet. We recommend that you order your packet in time for the first labor support experience you plan to use for certification after attending the DONA International approved workshop. This will allow you to make the most of the two years that your packet is valid. In any case, you must complete your certification requirements within four years of attending a DONA International approved workshop. The workshop itself is valid for four years, and there is no extension for it.

12. How much does a DONA International approved doula workshop cost?

Workshops vary in cost but tend to range from \$400-700, depending on the trainer and expenses involved in hosting a workshop. Fees also vary in what they include (tuition, books, etc.).

13. I am nervous about attending the birth by myself. What should I do?

Remember that the most important quality in a doula is a warm heart. More than anything, a warm smile, encouraging words and a soft touch are what you need to take with you to the birth. You are there to provide emotional support, not medical assistance. Your skills and knowledge will continue to grow with every birth. With the skills you attained at your doula workshop, you are ready to assist in your first births. You can do it!

14. Some of the births I attended were under 15 hours, but I did work with these clients during prenatal visits and during postpartum. Does that time count toward the 15 required hours?

DONA International's requirement is that you provide continuous in-person labor support for a total of at least 15 hours over three births. Each labor support experience does not need to be 15 hours. Prenatal and postpartum contact and visits do not count as labor support hours. The labor support hours begin when you join your client in person, before or at the onset of active labor, and then stay continuously for the entire labor, birth and immediate postpartum period.

15. One of the births I attended was a cesarean section. Can this birth still count for certification purposes?

Yes, as long as the cesarean birth meets all the requirements in your certification packet. Only one of the three births you submit for certification may be a cesarean birth.

16. I did not get a Client Confidentiality Release Form signed by one of my clients. Can I still use this birth?

To accept a birth for certification purposes, we must have a signature from the client/birthing person releasing the information. We cannot accept any paperwork without the signed release.

17. At every birth, I leave evaluations for the doctors or midwives and nurses to fill out, but I never get them back. What can I do?

Introduce yourself to them immediately and let them know you are working towards certification and will be asking for an evaluation at the end of their shift or before you leave following the birth. Show them the form and the questions. That way they will know to pay attention to you as they do their own work, and they will also see it will take no more than a minute to answer the questions on the form. The professionals providing an evaluation will need to have been able to observe and interact with you repeatedly and/or for a period of time during the labor and birth in order to be able to provide an evaluation.

18. May I use the same doctor or midwife more than once for my evaluations?

Yes, but we prefer to receive evaluations from different professionals for your three certification births, if possible.

19. How do I verify my DONA International membership status?

When you submit your application for certification, you must be a current member. You can verify your membership by checking the mailing label of the latest issue of your copy of the International Doula magazine. The expiration date of your membership appears in the upper right corner of the label. You can also check it on the [Member Login](#) on the DONA website. You do not have to call the home office to verify your membership if you know it is current.

20. How do I pay the certification application fee?

You may pay the fee online through the [Member Login](#) on the DONA International website and include a copy of your receipt with your application. If you prefer, you may also include a check or International Money Order payable to DONA International in U.S. funds for the correct amount.

21. Where should I send my completed certification application? Mail your completed certification application to:

DONA International, Attn: Certification 35 East  
Wacker Drive, Suite 850  
Chicago, IL 60601

22. After I send in my completed certification application, when will I hear from DONA International?

You may expect to hear within a month that your packet was received in the home office. It is difficult to predict when your packet will reach the hands of a reviewer, but do contact the DONA International home office if you have not heard from a reviewer within three months.

23. Is there anything I can do while I wait to hear about my application?

It is recommended that you still treat every birth you attend after you submit your application as a certification birth. Have your clients sign a Client Confidentiality Release Form, take detailed notes, complete the Birth Doula Support Record Sheets and request evaluations. That way you will have documentation for another birth, in case that is needed.

24. Is there anything I can do to speed up the process?

You can respond to your reviewer as soon as you are contacted. Respond to any questions or requests for more information promptly.