
Postpartum Doula Certification FAQs

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

Find DONA International approved workshops on our online locators. This way you can be sure that the trainer is DONA approved.

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

No, but DONA International members get a discounted rate when purchasing their packets, and you must be a member at the time you submit your packet for review.

3. I have been working as a postpartum doula for years. Can I get credit for that experience and shorten the certification process?

The postpartum doula certification process is the same for everyone in order to ensure that all those with the credentials PCD(DONA) share a common knowledge base, code of ethics and standards of practice.

4. I was trained by a trainer who is now DONA International approved. Can I now be grandmothers in as a postpartum doula? Do I still have to pay to attend a DONA International approved training workshop?

In order to achieve standardization of training and give meaning to certification, we do not grandmother in doulas on the basis of previous training. However, some DONA International approved postpartum doula trainers offer scholarships or reduced fees for people they have trained in the past. Trainers set and collect their own workshop fees. Contact your trainer and ask her about her policy.

5. I am certified by another organization as a postpartum doula. What do I have to do to be certified by DONA International?

The postpartum doula certification process is the same for everyone in order to ensure that all those with the credentials PCD(DONA) share a common knowledge base, code of ethics and standards of practice.

6. For the requirement of attendance at a lactation course, do the classes offered by hospitals to prepare people to breastfeed qualify?

A lactation course for expectant parents will meet the requirement if you are not an expectant parent at the time of observation, and as long as the class offers a minimum of three hours of instruction. A letter or certificate from the instructor must accompany your application for DONA International certification, as well as the instructor's credentials and a course outline or course objectives. Ideally, the class that you take will be intended for professionals, rather than for parents.

7. I have attended a lactation peer counselor training class. Will this meet the lactation education class requirement for postpartum doula certification?

Yes, if you can provide a copy of the certificate and an outline of the course work. Both must accompany your application for DONA International postpartum doula certification.

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

When you receive your certification packet from DONA International, there is a date stamped on the inside. You have two years from that date to complete the certification process. If your packet expires, you may purchase a one-time, six month extension for \$10. After the six month extension, if you do not complete the process, you will have to purchase another certification packet. You can request your packet either before attending a DONA International approved workshop or after. You must complete your certification requirements within four years of attending a DONA International approved postpartum doula training workshop.

9. How much do the DONA International approved postpartum doula training workshops cost?

Workshops vary in cost, depending on the trainer and the expenses involved in hosting a training. Trainers set their own fees. Some fees include tuition, books, meals, etc. Contact your trainer to ask what is included.

10. In the population I work with, feeding human milk is uncommon. Do I still need two out of three certifying experiences to be with people who are lactating?

Yes. It is an important part of your education. When you do work with people who are lactating, you will be better able to support and educate them if you have had some experience.

11. I did not get a release signature from one of my clients. Can I still use this postpartum support experience for certification?

To accept a postpartum support experience, we must have a signature releasing the information.

12. What are you looking for in the essays that I need to write about my postpartum support experiences?

For each experience, you must provide a written description of the experience, including the services you provided, the family's reaction to your support, and what you learned.

13. What are you looking for in the essays on the value of postpartum support?

The idea here is to help you clarify for yourself and others how you view your role as a postpartum doula. Skills and knowledge are extremely important, but so are a sense of purpose and an understanding of the essence of doula support.

14. How do I verify my DONA International membership?

When you submit your application for certification, you must be a current member. You can check your status 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's current.

15. Where should I send my completed certification packet and application fee?

After paying for the Application Fee online through the DONA Boutique the receipt will include a link and instructions to submit your certification packet through the online submission process.

You may also mail it to:

DONA International

35 E. Wacker Dr., Ste 850

Chicago, IL 60601

*Please do not send it signature required on receipt.

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

You may expect to hear within a month that your packet was received in the office. It is difficult to predict when your packet will reach the hands of a reviewer.

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

It is recommended that you still treat every postpartum support experience you have after you submit your application as a certification experience: have your client sign a Client Confidentiality Release Form, take notes, request evaluations from the mother and her partner/other adult, and write the essay. That way you will have documentation for another family, in case that is needed.

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

You can respond to your reviewer as soon as you hear from them. Respond to any questions they may have promptly and let your references know to expect a call from the reviewer shortly.

19. I want to be both a birth doula and a postpartum doula. Should I become a birth doula first?

It is not required. However, this is a decision that you need to make based on your own situation. You might choose one first because of the availability or location of training, or because one is more marketable than the other in your region. Another option would be to work on them at the same time. Some of the readings overlap, and if you are hired for postpartum, you might find it easier to be invited to attend the birth, and vice-versa.

20. Do I have to certify as both kinds of doulas?

DONA International does not require that doulas become certified in both areas. You can become a birth doula, a postpartum doula, or both. This is a decision that you need to make based on your own situation and interests.