

## REQUIREMENTS FOR DONA INTERNATIONAL BIRTH DOULA CERTIFICATION

- Attend a DONA approved Birth Doula Workshop
  - The workshop is valid for four (4) years.
  - Submit *a copy* of your Certificate of Attendance from that workshop with your application.
  - The completed certification application must be submitted and postmarked within four (4) years of attending the birth doula workshop.
- Purchase a DONA International Birth Doula Certification Packet.
  - Packet must be purchased **prior** to labor support experiences submitted for certification. These support experiences have to take place **after** attending the workshop.
  - Packet is valid for two (2) years from the date of purchase.
  - Packet includes all the information and forms required for certification.
  - One six (6) month extension may be purchased in the DONA Boutique under DONA Products, if necessary. This would extend the packet expiration date by exactly six (6) months.
  - Keep a copy of your DONA Boutique order confirmation for the packet purchase and the extension, if any, to submit with your application.
- Read and sign the following documents:
  - DONA International Birth Doula Code of Ethics
  - DONA International Birth Doula Standards of Practice (initial page 1, sign on page 2)
- Complete the required reading from the Birth Doula Required Reading List.
  - Sign the Statement of Completion of Required Reading and include it with your application.
- Basics of Breastfeeding Requirement - Submit ONE (1) of the following (A, B or C):
  - A. Proof of completion of one of the approved online breastfeeding study programs listed on the website. Please note: these programs are not DONA International products. You are responsible for following the program's instructions. Do not contact the DONA International office for assistance.
  - B. Completed and signed Basics of Breastfeeding Class/Workshop Attendance Verification Form confirming:

- Attendance at a breastfeeding class or workshop of at least three (3) hours, covering the basics of breastfeeding.
  - Ideally this class or workshop is targeted to birth and postpartum related professionals (preferred), such as may be offered in conjunction with a DONA approved workshop.
  - The class or workshop must be taught by an educator with recognized breastfeeding credentials (IBCLC, CLE or CLC).
- C. Proof of completion of lactation consultant, lactation counselor or educator, breastfeeding peer counselor or community breastfeeding educator training. We will also accept documentation showing current approval as a La Leche League Leader.
- View one (1) DONA International webinar with a business theme and submit a printed copy of your certificate of completion. You may choose any of the webinars on the *Every Doula Everywhere & Anytime* virtual education site at <http://www.vconferenceonline.com/dona/> that are marked with an asterisk (\*) to satisfy this requirement.
  - Childbirth Education Requirement - Document ONE (1) of the following options (A, B, C or D):
    - A. Training in childbirth education or midwifery
      - Enclose a copy of your certificate, or a letter verifying your training in childbirth education or midwifery.
      - Recognized childbirth educator organizations include, but are not limited to, the International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA), Lamaze International, American Academy of Husband Coached Childbirth (Bradley) and BirthWorks International.
      - Documentation from local certifying organizations (which describe course work and completion by applicant) may also be accepted.
      - You should be active as a midwife or childbirth educator at the time of submission, or retired less than three (3) years prior to it.
    - B. Recent experience in labor and delivery as a licensed practical or registered nurse
      - Submit a letter of reference from your supervisor on hospital letterhead verifying and detailing your work experience in labor and delivery with your application.
      - Your experience should be from within three (3) years of the time of your application.
    - C. Observation of an entire series of Childbirth Preparation classes (not as a participant / expectant parent)
      - Look for the most comprehensive series of in-person classes taught to expectant people in your area to observe. If possible, the series of classes must be at least 12 hours of instruction time. You will need to observe the entire series of classes.

- Complete Part One of the Childbirth Class Observation Form. From your notes, list the major topics covered in this series of classes, and have your instructor complete and sign Part Two of the form (at the end of the last class of the series). Then, by yourself, thoughtfully complete Part Three and include the fully completed form in your application.

#### D. Introduction to Childbirth for Doula class

- This course is offered in conjunction with a DONA Approved Birth Doula Workshop and must be taught by a DONA Approved Trainer.
  - Please include a copy of your certificate of attendance of this course with your application.
  - This course is an alternative to observing a childbirth education series, but you are encouraged to still observe a series of childbirth classes offered locally, so that you will have an idea of what your future clients may have learned when they attend them. It will also offer you an opportunity for professional networking with the instructor and the advantage of introducing yourself as a doula working toward certification to the expectant parents; both of which may lead to clients in the future.
- Develop a list of *at least* forty-five (45) local/area resources in *at least* thirty (30) different categories. Submit the list sorted into categories in a logical way, and in a paper-saving format (e.g., as spreadsheet or in columns), in a small but legible font size.

The categories listed on the List of Area Resources are suggestions to get you started. The **boldface** categories should be researched and contain listings (if at all possible), the other categories may or may not apply to your area. You may add additional categories relevant to your area or clientele.

- Provide birth doula labor support to several clients and their families.

Choose three (3) support experiences for certification. All three (3) of these support experiences must take place **AFTER** attending the DONA approved birth doula workshop and **AFTER** purchasing the birth doula certification packet.

- Additionally, these three (3) support experiences need to meet the following criteria:
  - The doula's presence must be continuous throughout the entire active labor for every birth submitted. Therefore, continuous in-person labor support **must** begin before or at the onset of the active phase of labor.
  - The certification candidate must have attended the birth and provided labor support as a birth doula, in accordance with the DONA International Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.
  - The doula submitting the birth must be the **PRIMARY** doula at the birth; this means the certification candidate needs to be the one providing labor support to the client and any family members. If more than one doula is present, the second doula must be in an observing role, and only the primary doula may use this birth for certification.

- The doula is required to be present for the actual birth and to provide immediate postpartum support for each submitted birth, for at least thirty (30) minutes.
  - The number of labor support hours during which the doula provided continuous in-person labor support for all three (3) births combined must total at least fifteen (15) hours.
  - Only one (1) of the three (3) births submitted for certification may be a cesarean birth.
- For EACH of the three (3) qualifying labor support experiences you will need to submit the following documentation:
    - DONA International Client Confidentiality Release Form signed by the primary client (birthing person)  
NOTE: This form is copyrighted and may not be altered in any way.
    - Good (no less than 3s) Evaluation of Labor Support Services by the birthing person, your primary client
    - Good (no less than 3s) Evaluation of Labor Support Services by the attending midwife *or* physician *or* nurse
      - The care provider and nurse should have been informed at the onset that you are a doula working toward certification and that you will be requesting an evaluation after the birth. Ideally, the professional will also have been shown the form and the questions ahead of time, so as to know what to pay attention to. All applicable questions will need to be answered.
      - The professional providing the evaluation should have been able to observe and interact with you during the labor and birth repeatedly and/or over a period of time.
      - It is preferred, though not required, to have evaluations completed by different care providers for each of the three (3) qualifying labor support experiences.
      - Evaluations from family members or other members of the support team will **not** be accepted as a substitute for an evaluation from the birthing person, the provider or the nurse.
    - Birth Doula Support Record Sheets

NOTE: Choose the form corresponding to the type of birth you attended. Your certification packet includes three (3) options:

- 1) For labor ending in a vaginal birth
- 2) For labor ending in an unplanned or emergency cesarean birth
  - Use this form only if your client experienced labor and you provided in-person labor support for a period of time prior to the intrapartum cesarean. *Only one (1) cesarean birth may be submitted for certification.*

### 3) For a planned cesarean birth, without preceding labor

- If there was no labor, or you were unable to provide in-person labor support prior to the cesarean, you need to have provided in-person support inside the operating room during the entire cesarean birth and surgery, and during the immediate recovery, as well as having contact with your client following discharge in order for it to qualify for certification. *Only one (1) cesarean birth may be submitted for certification.*
  - All forms must be completed by the certifying doula. Please write carefully and legibly.
  - All spaces need to be completed as indicated. Provide as much detail as you can.
  - List and describe at least ten (10) key events (such as comfort measures, changes in progress, the client's feelings and actions, coping), the client's reaction, and your response or assessment (what you thought, felt, did).
  - Include items relating to early and active labor, second and third stage, verbal information, encouragement, medications, interventions, caregiver actions, labor variations or complications, tests and interventions.
  - Include at least two (2) entries in each section.
  - Overall, be sure to include all necessary information and key events for the reviewer to get an accurate sense of this labor and birth.
  - Be specific with all dates and times. Consistently indicate A.M. or P.M., or use military time.
  - The forms in this packet may be duplicated as needed; however, forms are copyrighted and should not be modified in any way.
- Basic Knowledge Self-Assessment Tool
    - Include the completed Basic Knowledge Self-Assessment Tool with your application.

#### **Tips for taking notes and completing the Birth Doula Support Record Sheets:**

- *Prior to attending a birth, familiarize yourself with the forms and the information that is required, as well as the format for providing this information.*
- *Take detailed notes of all potentially relevant events throughout your contact with your client and the support experience. Include examinations, discussions, interventions and procedures, as well as your own thoughts and actions.*
- *Maintain all of your notes for each client in an individual notebook or electronic file.*
- *Use the date(s) and times as your bullet points for your notes, that way you will automatically have a timeline and chronology.*
- *Consider keeping track of additional information, such as phone calls, text messages, your observations, position changes, client's use of the rest room, quotations, music that played, etc. This will allow you to refer back to them during labor. (Ex: How long has it been since your client last emptied her bladder?). This log will not only help you complete the forms for certification but will also offer the basis for a log of this labor that could be shared with your client.*
- *After the birth, return home, rest, catch up with your sleep, and then – very soon, while this entire experience is still fresh in your mind – sit down with the notes you took and determine the appropriate Birth Doula Support Record Sheet to use, based on the type of birth experience it was.*
- *Carefully complete the entire form and fill in the blanks; be sure to select the key events you record in such a way that they will convey an accurate and comprehensive impression of the entire labor and birth support experience.*
- *Write legibly, use the abbreviations provided and add more pages, if needed.*
- *Keep your original notes; they may help you answer any questions from the reviewer during the process of reviewing your application.*

- Write an essay (500-1000 words) on The Purpose and Value of Labor Support.
  - Imagine yourself addressing someone who has never heard of a birth doula, and explain, *in your own words*, the value of birth doula support for the birthing person, her partner and the family.
  - Your goal is to give a good overview and introduction to the role of the birth doula, so someone who has never heard of the role, or has a misconception about it, will get an accurate sense of what a birth doula does and does not do. This is an opportunity for you to develop your own personal way to explain *in your own words* all the highlights you would need to address during an interview or when someone asks you what a doula is. Writing and refining this essay will make it easier for you to share with others what it is that you do as a doula, and what exactly that entails, and its benefits.
  - Be sure to include the roles, limitations, boundaries and responsibilities of a birth doula. Include some specific examples.
  - Review and reference the Position Paper, Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.
  - Include the benefits of doula care, as shown by current research. Give at least a handful of specific examples for various outcomes and measures that have been researched, not with numbers, but by trend, e.g. decrease of..., improvement of...
  - The essay will not be accepted if the doula primarily addresses their personal reasons for becoming a doula or provides anecdotes of their work as a doula.
- Meet with a perinatal health professional, explain the role and scope of a birth doula, and request completion of the Written Reference from Perinatal Health Professional Form. The form needs to be completed in English. The reference may be contacted during the review process.
- Identify a client who is willing to complete the Client Reference Form. Collect the completed document from this client in a sealed envelope and include it with your application. The form needs to be completed in English. The reference may be contacted during the review process.
- Sign the Website Content Release Form
  - Complete and sign this form and submit it along with your certification application, *even if you do not wish to be listed on the website at this time*.
  - Let your reviewer know at the time of certification what your listing preference is at that time.
  - After your certification, you may edit and change your contact and listing information through the DONA Login on the website at any time, if your certification and membership are in good standing.
- Confirm that your membership with DONA International is current through the DONA Login on the website at www.DONA.org.
  - If not, become a member or renew your membership under DONA Products prior to submitting your application, and include a copy of the DONA Boutique order confirmation from that transaction.

- Pay the certification application fee online through the DONA Login and include a copy of the order confirmation from that transaction, or include a check or International Money Order (payable in US funds) for the correct amount with your application for certification.
- Complete the Application for DONA International Birth Doula Certification
  - Complete the entire document carefully, filling in all the blanks.
  - Indicate your name as you wish for it to appear on the certificate.
  - Indicate your current mailing address and contact information. Be sure to write legibly, so the reviewer will be able to contact you.
  - Sign the application and date it.
- Use the Certification Requirement Checklist to ensure your application is complete.
  - Place the documentation in the order listed on the checklist. Do *not* use staples, clips, binders or folders. Simply place the individual documents and forms in order into the envelope.
    - Submit ORIGINALS of all DONA International forms with your application.
    - Exception: Submit a COPY of your certificate of attendance at the DONA approved birth doula workshop (and the Introduction to Childbirth and/or Breastfeeding class, if applicable), and keep the original(s).
    - Do not include the checklist.
- Make and keep a copy, for your own records, of **everything** you submit for certification.

## **MAILING INSTRUCTIONS**

- Mail the entire application to DONA International, Attn: Certification.
  - Confirm the current mailing address by checking [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org).
  - Consider sending it with a tracking option.
- Your application needs to be postmarked by the expiration date of your certification packet (or the extended date, if you purchased an extension) and while the workshop you attended is still valid, within four (4) years of the workshop dates.

## **What to Do After Submission of Your Certification Application**

- Continue to treat every birth you attend as a certification birth: request a signed waiver, take good notes, complete all the documentation, and request evaluations. In case there is an issue with one of the births you submitted, you will be more likely to have documentation for a qualifying replacement birth, if necessary, which will help speed the review process.

### **What to Expect During the Review Process**

- Allow a minimum of three (3) months for the office to process your application and assign it to be reviewed. Please contact the Home Office at Certification@DONA.org if you have not heard from a member of the Certification Committee after three (3) months.
- You will be notified by a reviewer once s/he has received the application.
- Respond to your reviewer and share when and how you can best be reached.
- Locate the copy of the certification materials you submitted, as well as the original notes you took during the certification births, so you can refer to them when talking with or responding to the reviewer.
- You will be notified by email, phone or letter if there are concerns with your application or additional information or documentation may be needed.
  - You will be given a deadline for submission of the requested information.
  - Communication is important. You are expected to keep in contact with your reviewer and to provide clarification or additional information, if needed.
  - If you are unable to submit any requested information by the deadline, you should contact your reviewer before that date to discuss the situation and suggest a reasonable extended submission deadline.
  - Your certification will remain on hold until all requirements have been met.
- Certification cannot be completed if your membership is not current.
- You are expected to act in a polite and professional manner when discussing concerns with the Certification Committee or Home Office staff, in accordance with the DONA International Code of Ethics.
- You should be aware that an incomplete packet may be returned to you for completion at the discretion of the Certification Committee. The application fee is non-refundable.

### **Denial of Certification**

- Certification may be denied to an applicant who falsifies information, does not meet or complete all requirements or does not adhere to DONA International's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. Certification may be denied at the discretion of the Certification Committee.

### **Refund Policies**

- No refunds will be provided for membership fees, certification packets, extension, or certification application fees, even if certification is denied or the applicant withdraws during the application process.



### **Certification Packet Extensions**

- One extension of six (6) months for this certification packet may be purchased for \$10 USD in the DONA Boutique under DONA Products at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org) or by contacting the Home Office at 888-788-DONA (3662).
- If necessary, a second certification packet may be purchased to complete certification.
  - Your application must be postmarked by the four (4) year anniversary of attendance at the DONA approved birth doula workshop, independent of the expiration date on the packet.
  - Certification requirements in the second packet must be met. However, any requirements that were completed in accordance with the first packet and that still meet the criteria of the second packet may be used and submitted with the application.
  - The email that accompanied the packets and/or dated proof of purchase from the DONA Boutique for BOTH packets need to be included with the application.

### **Replacement Fee**

- A replacement of this Birth Doula Certification Packet, before its expiration, may be purchased via the DONA Boutique under DONA Products for \$15 USD. The replacement packet will have the same expiration date as the original packet.

### **Forms in Languages Other than English**

- Clients should be able to read and comprehend the Client Confidentiality Release form and the Evaluation form.
- Please contact the DONA International Home Office at 888-788-DONA (3662) or email [Certification@DONA.org](mailto:Certification@DONA.org) if you are interested in receiving certification materials in languages other than English.

### **Oral Interviews**

- For applicants who are unable to write, an oral interview may be used for certification. Please call the DONA International Home Office at 888-788-DONA (3662) or email [Certification@DONA.org](mailto:Certification@DONA.org) to discuss this option and to make initial arrangements BEFORE submitting your application.

### **DONA International Birth Doula Data Collection Form**

- DONA International encourages all members, certification candidates and certified doulas to complete a Birth Doula Data Collection Form for each completed support experience and to submit these forms to the Home Office on a regular basis. This is not a requirement for certification, but we encourage everyone to participate by submitting the data from all support experiences. This data is used for statistical purposes and research.