



Postpartum Doula Certification

A Doula's Guide

(for certification packets ordered after August 2023)

Dear future doula,

Welcome to the amazing work of becoming a postpartum professional. As we are taught by the founders of DONA International, the work of professional postpartum support is so incredibly important to families world-wide. Together, we are making a difference for families! We are honored that you are interested in joining the esteemed group of DONA International certified doulas.

We understand that doulas come into this to work with a variety of clients. Training and certification with DONA International provide a fully comprehensive experience that will prepare you to work as a doula in the capacity that you see fit. From work with a nonprofit to work as a full-time career, the support of a doula is valuable to the big picture.

The DONA International certification process is an at-your-own-pace one (within three years). That's right! From the time you take your approved postpartum doula workshop until the time you submit your packet, you have up to three full years. Some doulas work through the requirements quickly, in just a few months, while others take every single bit of the three-year time span.



Your experience, your training, your pace!

This guide is meant to serve as an intro into our training process. You'll find that the process has several components, including hands-on training; course work; self-study; reading; and experiential training/evaluation.

Our experience with training doulas for over 30 years has taught us that the in-person training is essential to getting your doula work off to a good start. After your workshop, our training process includes education in various postpartum topics such as breastfeeding, business, postpartum mood disorders and more.

At the end of the certification process, our doulas report that they feel confident and prepared to support families.

We hope you will find this guide useful as you begin your journey. We invite you to read through the guide, and explore the website. When you're ready, reach out to one of our approved trainers who will help guide you along the way.

With care,

All of us at DONA International

POSTPARTUM DOULA CERTIFICATION: An Overview

Further details (guidelines and required documentation) are found in your Postpartum Doula Certification Packet. Packets are distributed at the Postpartum Doula Workshop and available in the DONA Boutique after an application candidate has registered their workshop in their DONA.org account profile.



Complete a DONA-approved Postpartum Doula Workshop (in-person, virtual, or hybrid)



Become a member of DONA International



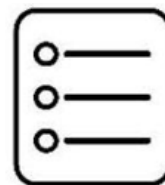
Fulfill the equity in birthwork education requirement



Fulfill the lactation support education requirement



Do the initial self-assessment checklist and your reading assignments (2 papers and 6 books)



Complete a resource and referral list for your community



Complete a final self-assessment questionnaire



After completing the Postpartum Doula Workshop, attend and document 3 postpartum support experiences



Purchase the certification application fee in the DONA Boutique



Fill out your application



Compile your packet materials and upload them at the address listed on your application fee receipt



Celebrate!

POSTPARTUM DOULA CERTIFICATION: Potential Financial Investment

DONA Approved Postpartum Doula Workshop DONA approved workshops are offered across the globe by a variety of world-class, excellent doula trainers. Some workshops have prerequisites, so check with your trainer for details. The postpartum doula workshop is valid for three years from the date of completion.	Approx. \$400-700
Membership in DONA International The benefits of membership include opportunities for networking, leadership, continuing education, and to participate in large scale advocacy for doulas and pregnant, birthing, and postpartum people; a subscription to the International Doula magazine; member newsletters, events, and updates; and, discounts on services and products, such as applications for educators to provide DONA approved contact hours, conferences, doula liability insurance, office supplies, and more.	\$100 ¹ /yr (discounts offered for multi-year purchases)
Equity in Birthwork Education Component All applicants are required to complete an equity in birthwork course on DONA Elevate. Log in to https://elevate.dona.org/culture_diversity_equity_inclusion and select a course from the category of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Racial Equity and Inequities in Birthwork course is available for free, while others have a fee that is discounted for members. Include your certificate of completion with your packet, which you will find on Elevate in your Dashboard after you've completed the course and passed the quiz.	Free-\$30
Lactation Support Education Component Candidates who are not already a credentialed lactation educator or peer counselor can meet this requirement in one of two ways: Either take a Lactation Support class with a DONA approved trainer OR take Lactation Support class for perinatal professionals that meets the requirements set in the Certification Packet.	Varies Some trainers include this requirement in their workshop
Reading Requirement: 2 Position Papers and 6 Books Workshop participants will read the DONA International Position Papers on Doulas and choose a book from each of 6 categories for self-study	Estimated \$0-150 Books purchases are not required
Certification Application Fee	\$155
Total Estimated Investment Training and certification investment vary greatly. Many doulas find ways to maximize opportunities to invest appropriately (e.g. use library for texts, using the coupon code for membership, finding workshops that include required components, etc.)	\$655-\$1135

¹ DONA International fees are based on the International Fee Group Index to country of residence. For current fees in countries other than the U.S., check the International Fee Group Index in the DONA Boutique at www.dona.org or call the Home Office at 888-DONA(3662). All fees are payable in U.S. funds only.

POSTPARTUM DOULA CERTIFICATION: FAQs

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

Find DONA International approved workshops thorough our online locators at dona.org website under the Become a Doula tab. This way you can be sure that the trainer is DONA approved.

2. **How do I register the Certification Packet I received at my training workshop?**

Visit the DONA International Boutique. You will need to create a user account, if you have not already. It is free to create a user account. Once you've logged in, you'll find the workshop registration in your user profile under the "My Actions" header. To register your workshop, enter the name of your trainer and the workshop date of completion.

3. **Do I have to be a member of DONA International to receive my Certification Packet?**

No, but DONA International members get discounts and access to DONA Connect, the ID Magazine, etc. You must be a member at the time of submitting your packet for review and remain a member through the duration of your three-year certification cycle.

4. **I took my workshop before August 15, 2023 and do not yet have a Certification Packet. How can I get one?**

Register your workshop as above in Question 3. After you have completed that step, the 2023 packet will populate in the Boutique for your purchase. Select the packet and complete the \$0 purchase. Wait 30-45 minutes for the packet to be sent to you via email.

5. **I took my workshop before August 15, 2023 and already have a Certification Packet. Can I get a refund and upgrade to the new packet?**

There are no refunds and no fees to upgrade. If you choose to upgrade, you will be beholden to the application process as outlined in the new packet, but can submit any client/course forms that have already been completed before your upgrade. There is not requirement to upgrade if you prefer to stay with the packet and application process you already have.

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

No, all client support experiences submitted, but have occurred after the completion of your workshop. 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.

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

In order to achieve standardization of training and give meaning to certification, we do not grandparent 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 about their policy.

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

You do not need to be a DONA certified doula to be a member of DONA International. However, to use the credentials and title of DONA Certified Doula, you must complete the DONA International Postpartum Doula 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.

9. How will I know if the DONA approved workshop I attended included the required lactation support education?

Inclusion of the lactation support education requirement is usually noted in the course advertisement. If it is included, it will either be noted on your certificate of completion or you will be issued a separate certificate for this component.

10. For the requirement of attendance at a lactation course, do the classes offered by hospitals to prepare people to lactate and feed their babies qualify?

No, the lactation course must be either taught in conjunction with your doula training workshop, a 3-hr or more course specifically for perinatal professionals, or the approved DONA International course at elevate.dona.org.

11. I am already a certified/licensed/accredited lactation professional/peer counselor. Do I still need to take the lactation support class?

No. Submit a copy of your credentialing documents with your application.

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

You must complete your certification requirements within three years of completing your DONA International approved postpartum doula training workshop.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. How do I verify my DONA International membership?

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

17. How do I pay the application fee and where should I send my completed certification packet?

Pay the Application Fee online in the DONA Boutique at dona.org or send a check or International Money Order payable to DONA International in U.S. funds for the correct amount. The mailing address is listed on the website.

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.

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

When your application is assigned to a reviewer, they will inform you from their own personal email address. Check your email and reply promptly if a reply is requested. Depending on our queue, it can take a few weeks to assign a reviewer.

19. 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.

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

When completing the record sheets, make sure that you have thoroughly answered all the questions and that your reviewer is able to get a good sense of your thought process while working with your client and that you understand the role, responsibilities, and standards of practice as a postpartum doula. Before sending your application, make sure that all your paperwork is complete and in the order requested. Disordered and incomplete applications slow down the review process.

Also, respond to your reviewer as soon as you hear from them. They may request additional materials.

21. 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.

22. 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.

POSTPARTUM DOULA CERTIFICATION: Required Reading

The required reading for certification includes two (2) DONA International Position Papers and six (6) books. You will choose one (1) book from each of the Groups A, B, C, D, E, and F for a total of six (6) books. You may be asked to read a book from Groups A, B, and C before you attend your Workshop. These will qualify as part of your six (6) required books.

For each book that you read, write three-to-five (3-5) sentences about your key take-aways. This should be a personal reflection, what you learned or how you plan to use this book in your work, not a restatement of the book's topic or content.

Find the Positions Papers in the Resource Library at <https://www.dona.org/the-dona-advantage/resource-library/> or in your workshop materials. All books on the required reading list are available in print or e-book unless otherwise noted. Books available as audiobooks are marked with asterisks (***)

Two Papers:

1. DONA International (2016). [*Position Paper: The Birth Doula's Role in Perinatal Care*](#)
2. DONA International (2016). [*Position Paper: The Postpartum Doula's Role in Perinatal Care*](#)

Six Books:

1. Group A. Postpartum Recovery. Choose one (1) of the following books:
 - Breedlove, G. et al (2023) *Nobody Told Me That: Surviving and Thriving the Early Weeks of Parenting* ***
 - Serrallach, O. (2018). *The Postnatal Depletion Cure: A Complete Guide to Rebuilding Your Health and Reclaiming Your Energy* ***
 - Torborg, J. (2018). *Your Best Body After Baby: A Postpartum Guide to Exercise, Sex, and Pelvic Floor Recovery* (Book 2 Vol. 2) ***
 - Hagger-Holt, S. and R. (2017). *Pride and Joy: A Guide for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Parents*
 - Johnson, K. A. (2017). *The Fourth Trimester: A Postpartum Guide to Healing Your Body, Balancing Your Emotions, and Restoring Your Vitality* ***
 - Ou, H. et al. (2016). *The First Forty Days* ***
 - Plaskin, (2000). *Mothering the New Mother: Women's Feelings and Needs after Childbirth: A Support and Resource Guide* (paperback only)
 - Kitzinger, S. (1996). *The Year After Childbirth: Enjoying Your Body, Your Relationships, and Yourself in Your Baby's First Year* (paperback only)
2. Group B. Newborn Development. Choose one (1) of the following books:
 - Sears, J. (2022). *The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know about Your Baby from Birth to Age Two*
 - Cook, W. et al (2020). *Mayo Clinic Guide to Your Baby's First Years*, 2nd Edition ***
 - Plooij, J. et al. (2019). *The Wonder Weeks: How to Stimulate Your Baby's Mental Development and Help Him Turn His 10 Predictable, Great, Fussy Phases into Magical Leaps Forward*
 - Nugent, K. (2011). *Your Baby is Speaking to You: A Visual Guide to the Amazing Behaviors of Your Newborn and Growing Baby*
 - Douglas, A. (2002). *The Mother of All Baby Books: The Ultimate Guide to Your Baby's First Year*
3. Group C: Lactation. Choose one (1) of the following books:
 - Kennedy, K. (2022). *Sweet Nectar: (Hopefully) Everything You Want to Know about Chestfeeding* (paperback only)
 - Brown, A. (2019). *The Positive Breastfeeding Book: Everything You Need to Feed Your Baby with Confidence* ***
 - Kaplan, R. and Theuring, A. (2018). *Latch: A Handbook for Breastfeeding with Confidence at Every Stage* ***
 - Newman, J. (2014). *Dr. Jack Newman's Guide to Breastfeeding* ***

- Logan, J. and Sangodele-Ayoka, A. (2014). *Free to Breastfeed: Voices of Black Mothers*
 - Morhbacher, N. and Kendall-Tackett, K. (2010). *Breastfeeding Made Simple: Seven Natural Laws for Nursing Mothers* ***
 - Wiessinger, D. et al. (2010). *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*
 - Kerkhoff Gromada, K. (2007). *Mothering Multiples: Breastfeeding and Caring for Twins or More!*
4. Group D: Postpartum Mental Health. Choose one (1) of the following books:
- Pacific Post Partum Support Society. (2023). "The Postpartum Journey" <https://postpartum.org/the-journey>
 - Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative. (2021) *You Are Not Alone: An anthology of perinatal mental health stories from conception to postpartum*
 - Mendedick, S. (2020). *Ordinary Insanity: Fear and the Silent Crisis of Motherhood in America* ***
 - Kleiman, K. (2019) *Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret of New Mothers* (hardcover only)
 - Sacks, A. (2019). *What No One Tells You: A Guide to Your Emotions from Pregnancy to Motherhood* ***
 - Honikman, J. (2014). *I'm Listening: A Guide to Supporting Postpartum Families*
 - Pacific Postpartum Support Society. (2014). *Postpartum Depression and Anxiety: A Self-Help Guide for Mothers*
 - Kleinman, L. and Davis Raskin, V. (2013). *This Isn't What I Expected: Overcoming Postpartum Depression* ***
5. Group E: Doula Work. Choose one (1) of the following books:
- Kelleher, J. (2019). *Nurturing the Family: A Doula's Guide to Supporting New Parents*
 - Pascali-Bonaro, D. (2014). *Nurturing Beginnings: Guide to Postpartum Care for Doulas and Community Outreach Workers*
6. Group F: Special Interest Topic. Choose just one (1) book from one (1) special interest topic. You may choose a book on this list or another book that informs on your community or practice. If you choose a book that is not on this list, include an assessment of whether or not your chosen book aligns with the DONA International model of care in your written take-aways:
- Anti-bias, Anti-racism, and Social Justice
 - Brown, Jennifer. (2022). *How to Be an Inclusive Leader: Your Role in Creating Cultures of Belonging Where Everyone Can Thrive* ***
 - Hill, C. (2022). *The Dream Clock: A New Tomorrow for Us and Them*
 - DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White Fragility. Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* ***
 - Oluo, I. (2019). *So You Want to Talk about Race* ***
 - Becoming a Parent
 - Honikman, J. (2022). *Postpartum is Forever: Social Support from Conception through Grandparenthood* (paperback only)
 - White, K. A. et al (2016) *Black Fatherhood: Trials and Tribulations*
 - Rosswood, E. (2022). *Journey to Parenthood: The Ultimate Guide for Same-Sex Couples* ***
 - Gottman, (2017). *And Baby Makes Three: The Six Step Plan for Preserving Marital Intimacy and Rekindling Romance after Baby Arrives* ***
 - Kleinman, K. (2021). *What about Us? A New Parents Guide to Safeguarding Your Over-Anxious, Over-Extended, Sleep-Deprived Relationship*
 - MacDonald, T. (2016). *Where's the Mother?: Stories from a Transgender Dad*
 - Klaus, M.H. and Kennell, J. H. (1996). *Bonding: Building the Foundations of Secure Attachment and Independence*

- Business
 - Brown, B. (2015). *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* ***
 - Slim, P. (2013). *Body of Work: Finding the Thread that Ties Your Story Together* ***
 - Seals Aller, K. (2009). *The Mocha Manual to Turning Your Passion into Profit: How to Find and Grow Your Side Hustle in Any Economy*
 - O'Neal-McElrath, T. et al. (2019). *Winning Grants Step by Step: The Complete Workbook for Planning, Developing and Writing Successful Proposals*
 - Beckwith, H. and Clifford, C. (2011). *You, Inc.: The Art of Selling Yourself* ***
- Emotional Health and Healing
 - Honikman, J. (2022). *Postpartum is Forever: Social Support from Conception through Grandparenthood*.
 - Wright Glenn, A. (2017). *Holding Space: On Loving, Dying and Letting Go*
 - Devine, M. (2017). *It's OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand* ***
 - Hone, L. and Reivich, K. (2017). *Resilient Grieving: Finding Strength and Embracing Life After a Loss That Changes Everything* ***
 - Edelman, H. (2007). *Motherless Mothers: How Losing a Mother Shapes the Parent You Become*
 - Heustis, J. et al (2004). *Companioning at a Time of Perinatal Loss: A Guide for Nurses, Physicians, Social Workers, Chaplains and Other Bedside Caregivers*
 - Wells, K. (2019). *From Three Heartbeats to One: A gentle companion offering hope in grieving pregnancy and infant loss*
 - Rosewood, R. (2013). *Cut, Stapled and Mended: When One Woman Reclaimed Her Body and Gave Birth on Her Terms After Cesarean*. (paperback only)
 - Simkin, P. and Klaus, P. (2004). *When Survivors Give Birth: Understanding and Healing the Effects of Early Sexual Abuse on Childbearing Women*, 2nd edition. (out-of-print)
 - Summerfeldt, J. (2018). *Healing After Birth: Navigating Your Emotions after a Difficult Childbirth*
- Newborn Sleep (Most postpartum families have questions about newborn sleep. If the book you choose from the Newborn Development category does not address newborn sleep, we encourage you to learn more on this topic.)
 - Infancy & Sleep Center, Durham. (2022). "What's New in Infant Sleep Safety?" YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2erxaE33So&t=154s>
 - Hookware, L. (2020). *Let's Talk About Your New Family's Sleep*
 - Wiessinger, D. et al. (2014). *Sweet Sleep: Nighttime and Naptime Strategies for the Breastfeeding Family*
 - Gethin, A. (2009). *Helping Baby Sleep: The Science and Practice of Gentle Bedtime Parenting*
- Perinatal History
 - Gonzales, P. (2012). *Red Medicine: Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing*
 - Cooper Owens, D. (2018). *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* ***
 - Roberts, D. (1998). *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* ***
 - Seals-Allers, K. (2017). *The Big Letdown: How Medicine, Big Business, and Feminism Undermine Breastfeeding*.
 - Freeman, A. (2021). *Skimmed: Breastfeeding, Race, and Injustice* ***
- Pregnancy to Postpartum
 - Douglas, A. (2015). *The Mother of All Pregnancy Books: An All-Canadian Guide to Conception, Birth and Everything in Between*
 - Hutcherson, H. and Williams, M. (1997). *Having Your Baby: For the Special Needs of Black Mothers-To-Be, from Conception to Newborn Care*
 - Simkin, P. et al. (2018). *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn: The Complete Guide* ***
 - Seals Allers, K. (2019). *The Mini Mocha Manual to Pregnancy and Childbirth*