



DOULA EDUCATIONAL 2-PAGER FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

WHAT IS A DOULA?

Doulas are trained, non-medical professionals who continuously provide emotional, physical and informational support to a pregnant women during pregnancy, labor and delivery and postpartum period.

Doulas may also have an important role during pregnancy and postpartum, breastfeeding, family planning and miscarriage.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY DOULA?

Community doulas are from the community they serve and are intimately familiar with the culture, language, customs, and needs of patients.

They provide culturally congruent, culturally sensitive, and language-appropriate care, and reduce the risk of birth disparities.

WHAT DO DOULAS DO?

- Prenatal teaching & childbirth education
- Comfort care & physical support during labor & birth
- Postpartum support including infant feeding & infant care
- Teach recognition of postpartum warning signs/symptoms
- Help articulate goals, preferences, needs, and fears
- Connect to community resources
- Bridge communication between patients & providers

WHY ARE DOULAS UNDERUTILIZED?

- Perceived high cost, but Medicaid & insurance avl in NJ
- Lack of knowledge about what a doula is and does
- Geographic lack of access to doulas in some places

- Perception by providers and nurses of doulas as a barrier to good, safe care
- Doula training in NJ are recently more accessible across state

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DOULA CARE?

Doulas Increase:

- Spontaneous vaginal birth
- Higher APGAR score
- Patient-centered care
- Positive birth experience
- Breastfeeding initiation

Doulas Decrease

- Costs
- Need for induction or augmentation of labor
- Labor length
- Use of pain medication
- Cesarean birth rate
- Use of forceps or vacuum for delivery

The positive effect of doula care is especially impactful for socially marginalized people, those with low-income, and individuals with cultural or language barriers.

Doulas simultaneously advocate for birthing people while acting as helpful allies to nurses and providers.

HOW CAN WE INTEGRATE DOULAS INTO THE HEALTHCARE TEAM IN NJ?

- Create hospital policies that reflect doulas as part of the healthcare team
- Cultivate a hospital culture that supports physiologic birth and reduced intervention for low-risk birthing people
- Explicitly demonstrate that institutions value doulas' unique skills and knowledge and that they complement existing technical and medical expertise
- Partner with local community-based doula programs to provide consistent and accessible support for patients
- Uplift doulas as useful, safe advocates for patients
- Create hospital policies that reflect doulas as part of the healthcare team
- Institute standards for interactions between providers, nurses, and doulas to support collegiality, open communication, and mutual learning



- Include doulas in departmental, interprofessional educational opportunities including about supporting physiologic birth, centering patients and racism-based disparities in maternity care

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