

Letter of Support for Doulas

"And for so many women, let's note doulas are literally a lifeline."
- Vice President Harris | White House Maternal Health Day of Action | Dec 7, 2021

What Is A Doula?

Birth Doulas prepare families for childbirth with evidence-based information and attend to the physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs of people in labor.

Postpartum Doulas provide culturally appropriate emotional support to assist parents with the transitions of the postpartum period and caring for a new baby.

In addition, doulas follow up with guidance and referrals to community resources for self care, lactation, and other issues pertaining to healthy parenting.

Why Are Doulas Essential?

Doulas provide essential non-medical perinatal support and have the potential to reduce disparities in birth outcomes. Professional organizations including ACOG, AWHONN, Association of Black Cardiologists, March of Dimes, and Postpartum Support International support the inclusion of doulas as part of the care team to promote improved and more equitable health outcomes for all birthing individuals.

Doula support can reduce the need for certain medical interventions and cesarean sections, leading to cost savings. Insurance coverage for doula care should be an industry standard, as out-of-pocket costs for doula care are not affordable for all families.



ICEA endorses the concept of the Circle of Care.

The key person in the circle of care is the pregnant person. This individual is responsible for selecting other people for information, advice, care, and support. Doulas are an essential part of this allied healthcare team.

ICEA Core Values

Compassion: We believe respectful, compassionate care improves birth and health outcomes for all.

Collaboration: We practice a culture of collaboration, serve as an integral part of the health care team, and provide essential support in the perinatal period.

Choice: We support freedom of choice based on knowledge of evidence-based alternatives and encourage active participation in health care decisions.

How Can You Help Make Doula Care More Accessible?

Hospitals

Hospitals can recognize doulas as allied health care professionals. Research shows doula support improves birth outcomes, increases patient satisfaction, and reduces disparities in health outcomes.

ICEA collaborates with hospitals to create in-house doula programs. If this is something your hospital desires, we can help!

Insurance Companies

Insurance companies can recognize doulas as a key factor in reducing costs, and provide reimbursement for doula services throughout the perinatal period for all birthing individuals.

Research shows a reduction in the use of medication, interventions, and cesareans for patients who have doula support.

Policymakers

Policymakers can recognize doulas as a critical component in maternal health programs for all pregnant, birthing, and postpartum individuals.

Include doula services in legislation to support a reduction in maternal mortality, improved perinatal mental health, and healthy birth initiatives.

Institutes of Higher Education

Institutes of higher education can collaborate with ICEA to incorporate doula skills into training programs and provide opportunities for certification.

At minimum, health profession programs should teach about the doula's unique role in supporting the psychosocial, physical, and emotional care of the patient.

References

ACOG committee opinion No 766 summary: Approaches to limit intervention during labor and birth. (2019). *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 133(2), 406-408.

Johnson Searcy, J. & Castaneda, A. N. (2021). On the outside looking in: A global doula response to COVID-19. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 6. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2021.613978/full>

Kozhimannil, K. B., Alarid-Escudero, F., Vogelsang, C. A., Blauer-Peterson, C., Hardeman, R. R., & Howel, E. A. (2016). Modeling the cost-effectiveness of doula care associated with reductions in preterm birth and cesarean delivery. *Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care*, 43(1), 20-27.

Kozhimannil, K. B., Hardeman, R. R., Attanasio, L. B., Blauer-Peterson, C., & O'Brien, M. (2013). Doula care, birth outcomes, and costs among Medicaid beneficiaries. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(4), e113-e121. 10.2105/AJPH.2012.301201

Kozhimannil, K. B., Vogelsang, C. A., Hardeman, R. R., & Prasad, S. (2016). Disrupting the pathways of social determinants of health: Doula support during pregnancy and childbirth. *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine: JABFM*, 29(3), 308-317. 10.3122/jabfm.2016.03.150300



Contact us:
ICEA.org
info@icea.org