

The Role of a Doula in Perinatal Mental Health

Scope of Practice

Doulas support the need for safe and positive support during pregnancy and postpartum (Arteaga et al., 2022)

Birth Doula	Postpartum Doula
<p><u>Physical Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positioning for comfort and labor progression ○ Provide physical support ○ Provide and education on counter pressure ○ Educate on breathing techniques ○ Providing warm baths/showers ○ Supporting mobility ○ Promoting adequate liquid intake <p><u>Emotional Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing information about labor progress to ease mother's anxiety ○ Encouraging use of coping strategies ○ Continuous presence and reassurance ○ Strategic comforting strategies during labor such as mindfulness. <p><u>Partner Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education for partners to support the labor and delivery process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Motivational support 	<p><u>Emotional Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Active listening ○ Empathy ○ Encouraging parents to make individualized decisions based on the family and the baby's needs ○ Emotionally prepare mothers for the transition into motherhood <p><u>Evidence-based Information, Skill-teaching, and Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Soothing techniques ○ Lactation/bottle feeding support ○ Supporting & educating normal newborn behavior and postpartum recovery expectations <p><u>Practical Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-home support ○ Organization of home to meet family's needs <p><u>Partner and Sibling Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Helps assist family in dedicated roles in the family to support the transition of a new baby.

- Supporting emotional journey of labor and delivery

Education of evidence-based information

- Offer resources so patients can ask questions about their birth as needed and make informed decisions
- Act as a bridge of communication between the patient and the provider

Advocacy

- Assist women in communicating wishes to others during the labor and delivery process.
- Encourage women to be empowered in their decision-making process during labor and delivery.

(Arteaga et al., 2022; Bohren et al., 2017; Dona International, n.d.)

- Educate on strategies for partner and family support of mother's mental health as well as strategies to address own mental health.

(Arteaga et al., 2022; Dona International, n.d.)

Conditions for Referral

There is no referral needed for accessing a doula. However, if a patient presents with interest in having increased support during labor and delivery or postpartum, a doula should be offered as a resource.

Resources to Access Doula Care

Doula Match

<https://doulamatch.net/>

Dona

<https://www.dona.org/what-is-a-doula/find-a-doula/>

The Educated Birth

<https://www.theeducatedbirth.com/>

References

- Arteaga, S., Hubbard, E., Arcara, J., Cuentos, A., Armstead, M., Jackson, A., Machikanti Gomez, A., and Marshall, C. (2022). "They're gonna be there to advocate for me so I'm not myself": A qualitative analysis of black women's motivations for seeking and experiences with community doula care. *Women and Birth: journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, 22. <https://doi-org.ezproxylr.med.und.edu/10.1016/j.wombi.2022.08.007>
- Bohren, M.A., Hofmeyr, G.J., Sakala, C., Fukuzawa, R.K., & Cuthbert, A. (2017). Continuous support for women during childbirth. *Cochrane Database System of Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD003766.pub6>
- Dona International. (n.d.). *Benefits of a Doula*. <https://www.dona.org/what-is-a-doula/benefits-of-a-doula/>