



Certification Program

The doula breastfeeding specialist (DBS) certification program was designed to combine the ongoing continuous emotional and physical supportive elements of doula care with breastfeeding techniques and knowledge. The program trains childbirth professionals to provide hospital and in-home breastfeeding support during the first weeks of a newborn's life, when exclusive breastfeeding is most at risk. The DBS would fill the the current gap in available breastfeeding support services. Women during the early postpartum period are not always able to conveniently leave home and go to an office appointment to obtain breastfeeding help. Although some lactation consultants may make home visits to assist moms having difficulty breastfeeding, the appointments are often two hours or less, which is not always enough time to overcome issues. Women may feel hopeful during an appointment, but then struggle with the next feeding at home and get discouraged. Additionally, breastfeeding challenges commonly happen in the middle of the night and during the early

mornings, when most breastfeeding professionals or lactation consultants are unavailable.

Doula breastfeeding specialists would support women similarly as doulas who attend births. They would work on-call and be available whenever a breastfeeding mom was in need. The DBS just like a doula would provide blocks of continuous time to assist a family and mother with breastfeeding. They would help the mother and baby feeding by feeding until things improved, and the mother felt more confident. This would be intensive support. However, as one study with the beginning title “She would sit with me” pointed out, moms with new babies gain confidence, receive empowerment, and benefit from having breastfeeding support from a trained individual that provides lengthy in home visits.¹⁰

Certification Steps

There are four steps to complete certification as a doula breastfeeding specialist:

1. Submit proof of current doula certification or complete the Childbirth Professional International (CPI) Doula Program
2. Take Doula Breastfeeding Specialist Training Course either in-person or online
3. Complete required reading:
 - Counseling the Nursing Mother, sixth edition by Lauwers and Swisher
 - Your Guide to Breastfeeding, by US Department Office of Women’s Health
 - Breastfeeding Handbook, by Newfoundland and Labrador
4. Document 40 hours of breastfeeding support

Doula Certification Requirement

Completion of the Doula Breastfeeding Specialist program requires participants to be currently certified doulas, or to additionally complete the CPI Doula Certification Program. The intent of this requirement is to provide verification that the DBS has acquired the support skills of doula care. The comfort and coping strategies used by

doulas for pregnancy through postpartum will be key to guiding families to become adept at breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding Support Hours

Program participants must assist families with breastfeeding providing a minimum of 40 hours of support as part of the steps to complete certification. These hours should include a minimum of two different families or mothers and babies. Participants will track support hours using the online documentation form. This requirement gives students the opportunity to practice their breastfeeding support skills and experience varied situations assisting families.

Program Completion

Participants will earn the Doula Breastfeeding Specialist certification once they have completed the program requirements. This certification will expire after four years. At which time they should renew certification by submitting 10 contact hours specifically related to breastfeeding/lactation to demonstrate they have maintained and/or increased their breastfeeding knowledge and skills.

Doula Breastfeeding Specialist Online Course

Main Objective

Doula Breastfeeding Specialists will be able to assess the mother/baby dyad for optimal breastfeeding and implement in-home support strategies through the first weeks of postpartum.

Credits

The course has 7 modules to complete. Participants completing the course earn 24 contact hours from the CA Board of Registered Nurses and Childbirth Professionals International.

Course Modules

1.	Historical Evolution of Breastfeeding
2.	Breastfeeding Support Strategies
3.	Breastfeeding Anatomy
4.	Basics of Breastfeeding
5.	Pumping, purchasing breast milk, & other options
6.	Breastfeeding past the first month
7.	Common Breastfeeding Challenges

Learning Outcomes

The curriculum is competency based. Students will be able to:

- Identify historical and contemporary issues relating to infant nursing practices
- Analyze the intrinsic significance and transformative experience of breastfeeding and the impact it has upon women, children, families and society
- Use breastfeeding devices to facilitate feeding infants and help women cope with breastfeeding challenges
- Evaluate supportive and non-supportive counseling strategies
- Promote the health benefits of exclusive breastfeeding
- Distinguish characteristics of proper latch and suckling

Rationale

Breastfeeding babies exclusively for the first six months of life improves infant survival and long term health.¹⁻⁴ Exclusive breastfeeding is defined as babies only receiving mother's milk:¹ no other liquids or food for sustenance. If 90% of all infants in the United States were exclusively breastfed there would be a health cost savings between \$3.6 billion³ and \$13 billion⁵ dollars per year. The risk of infectious diseases⁶ and

sudden infant death syndrome⁵ are reduced through exclusive breastfeeding. Women receive long term health benefits from exclusive breastfeeding reducing the risks of obesity, cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension.¹ Although exclusive breastfeeding is recommended by organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, and the World Health Organization^{1,3,6} only about 13% of babies are exclusively breastfed at six months in the United States.³

Families with new babies need assistance from an individual trained and knowledgeable about breastfeeding to overcome the challenges they may encounter in the first days and weeks breastfeeding. Increasingly women receive help to breastfeed in the hospital, and breastfeeding initiation rates are as high as 80% in many American hospitals,^{1,7} however it is when women return home after giving birth that breastfeeding problems often occur. Having breastfeeding support after being discharged from the hospital is a critical strategy to facilitate breastfeeding success.⁶ Women that received peer support during postpartum were 15 more times likely to breastfeed exclusively.⁸ Also, women who received the care of a doula for labor were more likely to both initiate and exclusively breastfeed for a greater length of time.^{1,3,8,9}

A doula is trained to give physical and emotional support to pregnant women and their families. Trained and certified doulas are knowledgeable about childbirth and can serve as advocates for families; however, doulas don't provide medical care. Doulas continuously remain by a woman's side through labor to help her cope with contractions using breathing, relaxation, massage, and other techniques. Doulas also provide care to families in their homes during postpartum. An increasing number of studies show that doula care improves birth outcomes for mothers and their babies.^{1,9}

In order to increase breastfeeding rates a holistic approach is imperative. Historically, women have received care by female relatives¹ or midwives during postpartum who assisted them with breastfeeding. In the past women had built in postpartum support and were not left on their own to figure out how to nurse their babies. Outcomes from recent studies

show that combining elements from the history of postpartum care such as support at home,^{1,2,4,10-12} guidance from individuals trained and experienced with breastfeeding,^{4,8,10,13} and emotional understanding from someone they can relate to

increases breastfeeding rates.^{1,10} This level of support would holistically help women successfully nurse, and is in strong contrast to the breastfeeding assistance families receive today. Based on these concerns the doula breastfeeding specialist curriculum has been developed to train professionals to provide in-home continuous breastfeeding support.

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Other CPI Certification Programs and Courses

Childbirth Educator
 Doula and Labor Support
 Prenatal and Labor Massage Doula
 Rebozo Techniques
 Birth Yoga Educator
 Train the Trainer

See the TheChildbirthProfession.com to learn about these other programs

Comparison Chart of CPI Certification to Other Programs

Features	Other Organizations	Childbirth Professionals Int
Yearly membership fee	Yes	None
Certification fee	Yes	None
Paperwork fee	Sometimes	None
Dedicated student services rep	No	Yes
Staff available by text message	No	Yes
Quick response time to inquiries	No	Yes
Recertification Fee	Yes	Waived for CPI CEUs
Nursing CEUs	Sometimes	Always
Digital forms track progress	No	Yes
Understandable process	No	Yes
Flexible solutions for students	No	Yes
Possible completion 1 - 3 months	No	Yes