The Doula Profession

Objectives

• Describe the work of doulas
• Understand the benefits of doulas
• Explore your intentions for becoming a doula

Outline

I. The Work of the Doula
   A. Support
   B. Encourage
   C. Create Confidence
   D. Advocacy
   E. Provide Information
   F. Facilitate Relationships
   G. Validate
   H. Respect
   I. Role Model
II. Benefits of Labor Support
   A. Decreases rate of complications
   B. Shortens length of labor
   C. Reduces incidence of cesarean birth
   D. Reduces need for pain medication
   E. Reduces anxiety

III. Identify Intentions for Becoming a Doula
Role and Scope of Doula Care

Doula Definition(s)

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Doulas provide ongoing emotional and physical support to families expecting babies. Doulas are part of the maternal health care team. Doulas do not provide medical treatment.

Doula support can extend through the entire reproductive cycle from puberty through menopause. Although, much of doula work is focused around pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum a doula’s supportive and nurturing skills can assist families with infertility, adoption, abortion, stillbirth, and a range of other life events. Many teenagers in the throes of their sexual development can use doula support, a nonjudgmental neutral individual to provide guidance and understanding through that transitive phase.

Doulas can implore a range of techniques and skills to assist those they serve, but often just being a nonjudgmental and supportive presence is enough.

The doula is a witness to a life event.

The doula is an advocate.

The doula offers wisdom and knowledge.

The doula helps individuals navigate stress, challenges, and unexperienced situations like childbirth.
Demographics

All individual can seek to become doulas. It not limited by race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other such designations. It is not required that a doula have experienced the circumstance in which they are providing support, in order to be effective. For example, although a doula may have never given birth, they can still offer emotional and physical comfort to women in labor.

Benefits of Doula Care

Improves birth outcomes

Reduces fear and anxiety

Reduces need for medication during labor

Reduces needs for medical interventions in labor

Reduces cesarean births

Increases breastfeeding proficiency

Increases women’s feelings of empowerment and satisfaction

Decreases birth trauma
Limitations of Doula Care

Doulas are limited to professional and respectful conduct.

Doulas must maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Doula care is limited to that which is not medical and not clinical.

No medical exams or procedures are conducted by doulas.

Doulas cannot give a medical diagnosis.

Doulas cannot prescribe medical treatment.

Doulas cannot assist with medical care.

Doulas cannot speak on behalf of those they serve.

Doulas cannot make medical decisions for those they serve.

Doulas cannot give medical opinions or medical advice.

Doulas trained, licensed, or certified in other capacities cannot conflict those qualifications and/or skills with the limitations of doula care.
Certification and Training

Those seeking certification as doulas should complete a training course which includes the following core topics:

- History of doula profession
- Pregnancy
- The labor and childbirth process
- Labor support techniques
- Medications and Interventions
- Evidence-based maternity care
- Informed Consent
- Postpartum
- Breastfeeding
- Infant Care
- Business and Marketing

Certification should be awarded to candidates demonstrating proficiency in their knowledge and skills to support families expecting babies. These can be verified by a mentor’s evaluation, client feedback, completion of a practicum or internship program.

Ongoing learning should continue for professional doulas through a range of modalities and be verified to maintain certification.
Unprofessional Conduct

Individuals serving as doulas should maintain professional behavior. Unprofessional conduct could affect a doula’s reputation, weaken the ability to attract clients, stunt the doula’s practice, or have a negative impact upon employment.

References

Links to reference articles can be found at the bottom of page http://thechildbirthprofession.com/role-and-scope-of-doula-care