

DASC Standards of Practice

Definition of a Doula: A professional experienced and trained in pregnancy, birth, and/or postpartum, who provides a continuum of physical, emotional, spiritual, and informational support to the childbearing person and their family.

I. Scope

A. Services Rendered

1. The birth doula accompanies the person in labor, provides emotional and physical support, suggests comfort measures, and provides support and suggestions for the partner or support person. Whenever possible, the doula provides prenatal and postpartum emotional support, including explanation and discussion of practices and procedures as needed.
2. The postpartum doula provides in-home assistance, guidance, and education with parent and baby care, infant feeding and family adjustment. The doula supports the birthing person emotionally and physically and may provide household assistance.

B. **Limits to Practice.** The doula does not perform clinical or medical tasks such as taking blood pressure or temperature, fetal heart tone checks, vaginal examinations, or postpartum clinical care. Doulas who are also health care professionals may provide these services within the scope and standards of their profession.

C. **Mediacy.** The doula mediates for the client's wishes as expressed in her birth plan, in prenatal conversations, and intrapartum discussion. The doula helps the birthing person incorporate changes in plans if and when the need arises and enhances communication between client and caregiver. Clients and doulas must recognize that the doula's role does not include speaking on behalf of or making decisions for the client. The doula's role is best described as support, information, and mediation or negotiation.

D. **Referrals.** For clients' needs beyond the scope of the doula's training, referrals are to be made to the appropriate resources.

II. Continuity of Care

A. The doula should make back-up arrangements with another doula to ensure services to the client if the doula is sick or unable to be reached. Should any doula feel a need to discontinue service to an established client, it is the doula's responsibility to notify the client in writing and arrange for a replacement, if the client so desires. This may be accomplished by one or more of the following:

1. Introducing the client to the doula's back-up.
2. Suggesting that another member of DASC may be more appropriate for the situation.
3. Contacting a local representative of another doula organization.

B. The doula will follow up with the client or back-up doula to make sure the client's needs are being accommodated.

III. Training and Experience

A. **Training.** Doulas will be trained through a DASC-approved training program such as DONA, CAPPA, ICEA, etc.

B. **Continuing Education.** A doula will participate in at least one continuing education event per year relevant to maternal/child health.

IV. Record Keeping

A. **Documentation.** The doula maintains clear and accurate records of each client encounter and the birth.