



## WHY WE LOVE OUR DOULAS

At South Community, doulas have been part of our team since the very beginning.

### **Why do we recommend you have one?**

**First**, they're there for you **when you need them most**. When labour starts to get active, it can be hard to know what's normal and how best to cope. Your doula is just a phone call away with reassurance, suggestions, and comfort measures. And as labour progresses, that's when doulas are especially valuable — helping you find a rhythm, try different positions, and feel supported as things intensify. They don't replace your partner — they strengthen your team. Even if you're planning an epidural, a doula is especially helpful for hands-on support when it's time to push.

**Second**, research shows doulas improve outcomes. Families with doulas are less likely to need interventions, and if they are needed, your doula is skilled at helping you navigate that process with caring support.

**Third**, doulas make a real difference in how families perceive their birth. With a doula's support, families are more likely to come away with a positive perception of their experience — feeling supported, respected, and cared for, no matter how the birth unfolds.

We've never once heard a partner say, *'I wish the doula wasn't there.'*

Our doulas wear BC Women's Hospital ID and are fully integrated into the hospital environment, moving seamlessly alongside you. They aren't outsiders — they are recognized members of our care team. Their presence strengthens everything we do, and we truly consider them indispensable.

**We couldn't imagine our program without them!**



Evidence that Empowers!

By Rebecca Dekker, PhD, RN, APRN of EvidenceBasedBirth.com

### Question: What is a doula?

**Answer:** A *birth doula* is a companion who provides people with continuous support during labor and birth.

### Question: What does doula support look like?

**Answer:** *Physical support* from a doula includes the use of massage, pressure, and soothing touch. Doulas create a calm environment, assist with water therapy, and help keep you nourished with ice chips, food, and drinks.

*Emotional support* from doulas helps people feel a sense of pride and empowerment after the birth. Examples of emotional support include encouragement and praise, helping you see your situation more positively, keeping you company, showing that they care for you, and helping you debrief after the birth.

Doulas can also support you with *information* during pregnancy and birth. For example, they can guide you and your partner through labor and suggest techniques like breathing, relaxation, movement, and changing positions. Doulas help you find evidence-based information about your options, and they can help explain medical procedures.

As far as *advocacy* goes, most doulas will not speak on your behalf. However, doulas should support you in your right to make decisions about your body and your baby. They will also use advocacy techniques such as encouraging you to ask questions and speak up for what you want. Doulas can also enhance communication between parents and providers.

### Question: What is the evidence on doulas?

**Answer:** There have been 26 randomized trials that tested the effects of continuous labor support on more than 15,000 people giving birth. Overall, people who receive continuous support are more likely to have a normal vaginal birth and less likely to have pain medication, negative feelings about childbirth, and Cesareans. In addition, their labors are shorter and their babies are less likely to have complications at birth

or be admitted to a NICU. In these studies, the best results occurred when the continuous support was provided by a trained doula—someone who was not a staff member at the hospital and not part of the birthing person's social network.

### Question: How can doulas work with partners?

**Answer:** Ideally, doulas and the birth partner (i.e. spouse, partner, family member) work together to improve the mother's birth. Studies have shown that the most positive birth experiences for fathers/partners are ones where they have continuous support from a doula or midwife. In one important randomized trial, adding a doula to a supportive partner reduced Cesarean rates from 25% down to 13%. These differences were even more apparent with a labor induction. When labor was induced, the Cesarean rate was 59% with a partner alone, and 13% when partners worked together with doulas.

### Question: What's the bottom line?

**Answer:** Of all the ways birth outcomes could be improved, continuous labor support seems like one of the most important and basic needs for birthing people. Research has shown that labor support from doulas is both risk-free and highly effective.

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“ Doulas should be viewed as a valuable, evidence-based member of the birth care team.”

1. Bohren, M.A., Hofmeyr, G., Sakala, C., et al. (2017). "Continuous support for women during childbirth." Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2017, Issue 7. Art. No.: CD003766.
2. Johansson, M., Fenwick, J., & Premberg, A. (2015). "A meta-synthesis of fathers' experiences of their partner's labour and the birth of their baby." Midwifery 31(1): 9-18.
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4. McGrath, S. K. and Kennell, J. H. (2008). "A randomized controlled trial of continuous labor support for middle-class couples: effect on Cesarean delivery rates". Birth 2008; 25:3.
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## Doula Program Information and Registration

The word Doula refers to a supportive companion (not a friend or loved one) experienced in attending childbirth and trained to provide continuous emotional and physical support during labour. Evidence suggests that doula support can have enormous benefits for the pregnant person, newborn, and family. There have been many studies and several randomized trials confirming the benefits of the presence of a doula. People randomized to receive doula support also reported higher self-esteem and stronger feelings of attachment to their newborn six weeks after birth than people who did not receive doula support.

- **Emotional support:** Encouragement and reassurance throughout the labour and birth.
- **Physical support:** Massage, warm compresses, and other comfort measures. It can also include non-pharmaceutical forms of pain management such as position changes, relaxation exercises, massage, breathing techniques and the use of a TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) unit.
- **Informational support:** Assisting a pregnant person in understanding their options during labour and providing language translation when necessary. The doula does not offer medical advice.
- **Partner support:** Role modeling and providing reassurance and encouragement for partner or support people. The doula allows partner or support people to participate in the labour and birth at their own comfort level.

The type of support provided by the doula is based on individual preferences and is usually discussed with the pregnant person and partner prenatally. An important element of the doula's role is the continuity of care that they provide by remaining with the pregnant person throughout their labour and birth.

**Training:** All doulas on the SCBP Team have attended an Approved Birth Doula Training and completed our SCBP doula orientation. Upon joining our team, doulas are required to sign a standard of practice form and a confidentiality agreement. New team members undergo a program-specific orientation to SCBP collaborative practice and receive in person mentorship from senior team members.

**What to Expect:** This form is ideally completed around the 33rd week of your pregnancy. The Director of the Doula Program considers a variety of factors when assigning your doula to ensure the best possible match for your needs.

**Language preference:** If you speak a language other than English at home or would appreciate a doula who is culturally sensitive to your individual needs, the doula coordinator will take this into consideration.

**Preferences:** If you have other preferences or considerations, like the doulas background, age, or if you prefer a doula of a similar faith, please note it on your form. Your doula is dedicated to supporting you according to your wishes, and they will never bring their beliefs or faith into your experience.

**When will you meet your doula and what to expect:** Your assigned doula will contact you via the number provided on your preference form around the 35<sup>th</sup> week of your pregnancy. At that time a prenatal visit will be arranged.

You will have one virtual prenatal visit with your doula.

- Your doula will be on call for you 24/7.
- Please inform your doula when labour begins and avoid going to the hospital before alerting both your doula and the emergency line.
- Your doula will offer you and your support person guidance via telephone when your labour starts to get progressive.
- Your doula will join you in labour when you are getting admitted to the hospital.
- Once at the hospital, the doula will stay with you continuously until your baby is born, usually an hour or so or longer if needed.
- You can expect one virtual postpartum visit from your doula within two weeks of being home.

**Back up:** Our doula team works collaboratively to ensure seamless support throughout your journey. If your designated doula requires a backup for any reason, they will communicate your personal wishes and preferences to ensure continuity of care. In most cases, the doula you met prenatally will be the one supporting you during your birth.

**What's the difference between an SCBP doula and hiring a community based private doula?**

The South Community Birth Program is a multidisciplinary, collaborative maternity program where our doulas are an integral part of the team. Many of our doulas also support families privately in the community. One of the many advantages of working as a doula at SCBP is being recognized as an essential part of the care team. Our doulas and providers collaborate closely with BC Women's Hospital staff to ensure your experience is cohesive and well-connected.

Choosing an SCBP doula means gaining an additional point of contact within your care team. Our doulas find profound fulfillment in supporting Vancouver families who face financial constraints and would otherwise be unable to access doula care at market rates. They wear hospital-issued BC Women's ID and are fully integrated into the hospital setting.

**Doula Program:** Since our inception, we've been committed to ensuring that every family in our care who desires the assistance of a doula, receives it. In the Vancouver area, doula services typically come with fees ranging from **\$1,500 to \$2,800**, making them financially out of reach for many families under our care. At SCBP, we believe that all families should have access to this valuable support and believe strongly the services provided should be the same for everyone who registers with our program.

\*By contributing to our doula program, you are helping us reach our goal of making doula care accessible to all families in care with us who want it, regardless of their financial circumstances.

**\*Our doula program offers the same compassionate care and support to every family, no matter their financial contribution.**

**How much to Pay:** In creating our fee-based structure, we've drawn inspiration from some of our favorite **sliding scale** models to help families adjust payments based on their access to resources.

**Sliding Scale:** A system where fees are adjusted based on an individual's income or financial needs, ensuring services are accessible to everyone.

**Subsidies:** If your family is interested in doula care but the fee is a barrier, please speak with your care provider about filling out our subsidy support form.

\$1,200 <-----> \$800	\$800 <-----> \$650.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have expendable Income.</li> <li>• Own your home, rent higher end property, or have investments.</li> <li>• Have retirement accounts or inherited money.</li> <li>• Travel for recreation.</li> <li>• Have access to family resources in times of need.</li> <li>• Have a relatively high degree of earning power due to education level, gender &amp; racial privilege, class background, etc.</li> <li>• Are employed or don't need to be employed.</li> <li>• Have access to financial savings.</li> <li>• Can afford an annual vacation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have some expendable income.</li> <li>• May have access to savings.</li> <li>• Take a vacation every year or every few years without financial burden.</li> <li>• May occasionally stress about needs but regularly meet them.</li> <li>• Have some debt but it does not interfere with attainment of basic needs.</li> <li>• Have some financial burden due to caring for relatives.</li> </ul>

\* If you would like **additional support beyond what our program offers**, you are welcome to hire an SCBP doula privately. Please let us know if you'd like a list of our doula team members who offer private packages

\* If your **extended health benefits** cover doula support, please let our office know if you require a receipt with the necessary details for submission.

### **Doula Program Payment**

- You will receive an invoice by email at 36 weeks for the amount you have declared. We kindly ask that **payment be made upon receipt** to ensure your assigned doula stays in place.
- If you would like to receive your invoice earlier than 36 weeks, or if you wish to discuss a payment plan, please email our Director of the Doula Program at **jalana@scbp.ca**.
  - Payments can be made in person at the office via Interac or credit card.

**DOULA PROGRAM REGISTRATION INFORMATION:**

Full Name on Care Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Person in Care Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

What is your estimated due date? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have other children: Yes \_\_\_ No

Do you speak a language at home other than English? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any specific requests or preferences you would like the coordinator to consider when assigning your doula?

*Your assigned doula will contact you **directly** at the above provided number.  
Due to the nature of the program, doulas are **assigned** to SCBP clients by the Doula Coordinator.  
However, the Coordinator will do their best to consider your requests!*

**Please state the exact amount you would like to declare on the sliding scale: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_**

**\*\*\*NOTE: If YOU do not call your doula in labour, we are unable to refund your fee\*\*\***



VANCOUVER COMMUNITY BIRTH  
FOUNDATION

**Your generosity can make a difference! Donate to  
our doula program to help provide support for a  
family facing financial barriers**

**[vancouverbirthfoundation.org](http://vancouverbirthfoundation.org)**

*Contact our office if you have any questions, Thank you!*