



NEW YORK COALITION  
FOR DOULA ACCESS

## Doulas Are Covered by Medicaid in NY State!

*Learn about the benefits of doula care for your patients.*

“Evidence suggests that, in addition to regular nursing care, continuous one-to-one emotional support provided by support personnel, such as a doula, is associated with improved outcomes for women in labor.”

—*Approaches to Limit Interventions During Labor and Birth*, ACOG Committee Opinion No. 766, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2019

As we face a growing maternal and infant mortality crisis in the United States, we need to use all available resources to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. Solutions must focus on Black pregnant and postpartum people and their babies, who are disproportionately affected by this crisis. Doula care is one of the resources available to address disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. **As of March 1, 2024, doula care is covered by Medicaid in NY State.** Learn about the benefits of doula care and how to ensure your patients can access this lifesaving support.

### Doula Definition and Scope of Work

A doula is a trained birth specialist who offers various culturally sensitive services, such as ongoing physical, emotional, spiritual, and informational support to clients and their families before, during, and after childbirth. Doulas help their clients prepare for birth, advocate for their own wishes, take an active role in their pregnancy journey, and transition into parenthood. Some Doulas also support people through miscarriages, stillbirths, and abortions. Doulas do not provide medical care.

Community-based doulas typically come from the same community as the pregnant and postpartum people that they serve. This ensures cultural congruency, greater access to linguistic support, and an understanding of the challenges faced by Black, Native American/Indigenous, and other communities experiencing the highest burden of birth disparities.

### Benefits of doula care:

#### Emotional

- Patients with doula care have greater overall satisfaction with their birth experience and decreased rates of anxiety and postpartum depression.
- Doulas can increase patients' sense of empowerment and enhance communication with medical providers.
- Doulas can help reduce the impacts of racism and racial bias in health care settings by providing culturally congruent, client-centered care.
- Doulas can help improve bonding between a birthing person and their baby.

#### Physical

- Doulas can help reduce overall maternal care spending on medical procedures and reduce complications such as preterm and cesarean births.
- Working with doulas can also result in shorter labor and less use of pain medication.
- Patients who have a doula are more likely to attend their prenatal and postpartum visits.
- Babies have higher APGAR scores.
- Patients experience greater breastfeeding success in rates of initiation and duration.

## Who can access doula care?

NY State Medicaid enrollees who are pregnant or were pregnant within the past year qualify for access to full-spectrum doula care. Services can be provided during pregnancy, labor and delivery, miscarriage, abortion, and the 12 months after the end of the pregnancy. Covered doula services are available to all eligible Medicaid enrollees without co-payments or any additional out-of-pocket costs.

## When should I refer my patient to doula care?

The sooner a patient can be connected to doula support, the better! Medicaid covers 8 doula visits, which can take place in person or via telehealth during the prenatal and/or postpartum periods, depending on the patient's preferences. Additionally, doulas are covered for one labor and delivery encounter to provide continuous in person support for the patient. Ideally, patients should meet with their doula before giving birth to establish a relationship, receive informational support, and discuss their birth and postpartum plans. If your patient has already given birth, you can still refer them for postpartum doula support.

## How can Medicaid enrollees find a doula?

All NYS doulas who have enrolled as Medicaid providers can be found in the NYS Doula Directory: [https://www.health.ny.gov/health\\_care/medicaid/program/doula/directory/directory.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/doula/directory/directory.htm)

Learn more about the doula Medicaid benefit at [https://www.health.ny.gov/health\\_care/medicaid/program/doula/](https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/doula/)

If you are interested in joining the NY Coalition for Doula Access, a group of doulas, maternal health providers, and advocates dedicated to improving equitable doula access across New York State, please visit <https://healthleadsusa.org/initiatives/maternal-and-child-care/nycda/>

## Research Citations on the benefits of doula care:

Alvarado, G, Schultz, D, Malika, N, Reed, N. United States Doula Programs and Their Outcomes: A Scoping Review to Inform State-Level Policies. Women's Health Issues. 2024; doi: [10.1016/j.whi.2024.03.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.whi.2024.03.001)

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Bohren MA, Hofmeyr GJ, Sakala C, Fukuzawa RK, Cuthbert A. Continuous support for women during childbirth. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2017;(7):CD003766. doi:[10.1002/14651858.CD003766.pub6](https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD003766.pub6)

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