

Doulas: The Facts

Doulas provide **continuous physical and emotional support** and assistance for women and their partners during labor and birth. Doulas are not clinicians, and do not provide medical care.

A Cochrane analysis, the gold standard in reviews of scientific research, found numerous benefits to continuous labor support, including: • **39% reduction in the likelihood of cesarean births** • 15% greater likelihood of a spontaneous vaginal birth • 10% reduction in the use of pain medications • Shorter labor by an average of 41 minutes • **31% reduction in reporting a negative birth experience**

Florida has the country's **third highest rate of cesarean sections**: 36.8%.

Both commercial and Medicaid payers pay approximately **50% more for cesarean** than vaginal births.

Eight of Florida's Medicaid Managed Care plans are currently offering doula services under AHCA's expanded benefits.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine state that **one of the most effective** tools to improve labor and delivery outcomes is the continuous presence of support personnel, such as a doula.

Among surveyed mothers who knew about doulas but did not use a doula in their recent birth, more than **one in four would have liked** to have had doula care.

Community based doula support is associated with **lower rates of preterm and low birthweight births** and postpartum depression, and increased breastfeeding initiation and duration.

“Doulas are a public health intervention...The most effective doula support comes from... someone who is culturally and linguistically congruent with their client.”

—Dila Perera, MSW MPH, Executive Director at Open Arms Perinatal Services, Seattle, Washington



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