

## Appendix A: DONA International Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics

### DONA International Birth Doula Standards of Practice

#### I) Scope of Practice

A) *Services Rendered.* The doula accompanies the woman in labor, provides emotional and physical support, suggests comfort measures, and provides support and suggestions for the partner. Whenever possible, the doula provides pre- and post-partum emotional support, including explanation and discussion of practices and procedures, and assistance in acquiring the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about her care.

Additionally, as doulas do not “prescribe” treatment, any suggestions or information provided within the role of the doula must be done with the proviso that the doula advise her client to check with her primary care provider before using any application.

B) *Limits to Practice.* DONA Standards and Certification apply to emotional and physical support only. The DONA certified 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. If doulas who are also health care professionals choose to provide services for a client that are outside the doula’s scope of practice, they should not describe themselves as doulas to their client or to others. In such cases they should describe themselves by a name other than “doula” and provide services according to the scopes of practice and the standards of their health care profession. On the other hand, if a healthcare professional chooses to limit her services to those provided by doulas, it is acceptable according to DONA’s standards for her to describe herself as a doula.

C) *Advocacy.* The doula advocates for the client's wishes as expressed in her birth plan, in

prenatal conversations, and intrapartum discussion, by encouraging her client to ask questions of her caregiver and to express her preferences and concerns. The doula helps the mother incorporate changes in plans if and when the need arises, and enhances the communication between client and caregiver. Clients and doulas must recognize that the advocacy role does not include the doula speaking instead of the client or making decisions for the client. The advocacy role is best described as support, information, and mediation or negotiation.

D) *Referrals*. For client needs beyond the scope of the doula's training, referrals are made to 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 unable to attend the birth. 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:

- Introducing the client to the back-up doula.
- Suggesting that another member of Doulas of North America (DONA) or other doula may be more appropriate for the situation.
- Contacting a DONA Regional Representative or local doula organization for names of other doulas in the area.
- Following up with client or back-up doula to make sure the client's needs are being accommodated.

### III) Training and Experience

A) *Training*. Doulas who are certified by DONA will have completed all the requirements as set forth in the DONA Requirements for Certification. This includes training in childbirth and a labor support course, which has been approved by the DONA Education Committee, reading four books from the DONA Reading List, and completion of an essay on the value and purpose of labor support. See the DONA Requirements for Certification for more detail on Training and Experience.

B) *Experience*. Doulas certified by DONA will have the experience as set forth in the DONA Requirements for Certification. This includes provision of support to at least three clients, good evaluations from clients and health care providers, and records of three births, including a summary, observation form, and account of each birth.

C) *Maintenance of Certification*. DONA-certified doulas will maintain certification as outlined in the DONA recertification packet. Recertification must be completed after each three-year period of practice.

## DONA International Birth Doula Code of Ethics

### I. Rules of Conduct

A. *Propriety*. The doula should maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identity as a labor support provider.

B. *Competence and Professional Development*. The doula should strive to become and remain proficient in the professional practice and the performance of professional functions through continuing education, affiliation with related organizations, and associations with other Labor Support Providers.

C. *Integrity*. The doula should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.

### II. Ethical Responsibility to Clients

A. *Primacy of Client's Interests*. The doula's primary responsibility is to her clients.

B. *Rights and Prerogatives of Clients*. The doula should make every effort to foster maximum self determination on the part of her clients.

C. *Confidentiality and Privacy*. The doula should respect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.

D. *Obligation to Serve*. The doula should assist each client seeking labor support either by providing services or making appropriate referrals.

E. *Reliability*. When the doula agrees to work with a particular client, her obligation is to do so reliably, without fail, for the term of the agreement.

F. *Fees*. When setting fees, the doula should ensure that they are fair, reasonable, considerate, and commensurate with services performed and with due regard for the client's ability to pay.

The doula must clearly state her fees to the client, and describe the services provided, terms

of payment and refund policies.

### III. Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues

A. *Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy.* The doula should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.

B. *Dealing with Colleagues' Clients.* The doula has the responsibility to relate to the clients of colleagues with full professional consideration.

### IV. Ethical Responsibility to the Labor Support Profession

A. *Maintaining the Integrity of the Profession.* The doula should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge and mission of the profession.

B. *Community Service:* The doula is encouraged to assist the DONA vision of “A Doula For Every Woman Who Wants One” by making reduced cost or no cost labor support services available when possible.

### V. Ethical Responsibility to Society

A. *Promoting Maternal and Child Welfare.* The doula should promote the general health of women and their babies, and whenever possible, that of their family and friends as well.

## Appendix B: Participant Documents

### Participant Solicitation Letter

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am a researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Madison who is interested in hearing your birth story. This is not a survey with a long list of questions. Instead I want to sit and listen to you tell me how it went for you, what you liked and didn't like. Since you had a doula, I am very interested in what that experience was like. There has been no research done on doula care with a hospital program like that at Lexington Medical Center, which is why I am willing to come so far to talk to you.

Here are the answers to some questions people usually have:

- All of your identifying information will be kept confidential so that no one at the hospital will know what you have said to me.
- I would like to talk to both moms and dads, but I don't need to talk to both of you if only one is interested. I can interview you separately or at the same time.
- I would like to interview you when your baby is between ten and fourteen weeks old. I can meet when it is convenient for you, either at your house or at my hotel. Your baby can be with you during the interview, and I expect some baby-related interruptions. When there are few interruptions, interviews usually take about an hour.
- By giving me your information, you are only consenting to be contacted with more information about the project. You are NOT consenting to be interviewed, only to be contacted.

Thank you for considering participating!

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## Mother Interview Questions

(Focus on feelings, relationships, ways of being with, wondering with.)

### Interview Questions For Mothers:

1. So, tell me the story of your birth experience with *baby's name* and what it was like for you. You can share with me any details about the experience that you wish.
2. It sounds like you had your partner with you and your doula (include others if they were present). How was your doula there for you in ways that were most effective? You get to decide what effective means for you.
3. Some moms recall feeling like their doula was really there “with” them. Did you feel that kind of connection with *doula's name* or not really?
4. Were there any times or anything that someone did, where you didn't feel supported?  
  
Follow up: If doula is not mentioned, ask specifically if there were times she didn't feel supported by her doula.
5. We've been talking about your doula a lot. How about the other people who were there during your labor and birth? Did you feel like they supported you at times? In what ways?
6. I am curious about how your doula established a relationship with you. I wonder if you could think back about how that came about – going from acquaintances to her being able to really be there for you at your birth. I wonder what that felt like for you.
7. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your labor and birth...or doulas...or anything else you'd like me to know?

## Father Interview Questions

1. So how did you decide to include a doula at your birth? How did that come about? Is it something that you felt comfortable with right away?
2. Tell me the story of Baby's birth. How were things going before you got to the hospital? What was that like for you?
3. How did it feel when the doula joined you? Did she blend in or did she start something new – did it feel disruptive?
4. Did you feel supported by your doula? How? Nurse? Midwife or physician?
5. Are there times when you didn't feel supported by anyone?
6. Were there ways you wanted to participate but didn't? Were there ways you didn't want to participate but felt you should?
7. Did you feel that you worked together with your doula and/or hospital staff to help your wife/partner in labor? Or did you feel like an outsider?
8. What surprised you?
9. How could you have been better prepared for this experience?
10. Were there any negative things that happened?
11. Did you consider having your mother there? (Or mother in law?) Why or why not? (If she was present, how did she contribute? What was that like?)
12. Anything else?

## Doula Interview Questions

Thank you, *doula's name*, for agreeing to talk with me today about your work. I am really interested in your thoughts and feelings about labor support and doula work.

1. Tell me a little bit about your practice, who you usually work with, how you work with clients, that sort of thing.
2. What do you think is the most challenging part of your practice?
3. Take a moment and think about the last birth you attended. What did you do that made you feel effective or that you'd done a good job? If you didn't feel it went well, tell me about that too.
4. When do you usually start working with moms or families? Can you tell me about how working with moms or couples prenatally changes things during labor?
5. Take a moment and think of a client whose ideal birth was very different from the ideal birth that you would want. How did this affect your labor support?
6. What I'm becoming more curious about is how doulas relate to medical caregivers such as doctors and nurses. Would you tell me a story that illustrates for me a way you usually are with doctors or nurses?
7. If there was a new doula sitting at the table with us today, what would you tell her are the most important skills for a doula to cultivate?
8. What do you think makes doulas last in this profession?  
Follow up: what's helped you last?
9. What do you think helps doulas have successful practices?  
Follow up: what's helped you have a successful practice?
10. Is there anything else that you feel contributes to good labor support between a doula and a mother or a doula and the mother's family that you haven't mentioned?
11. Is there anything else you would like me to know?