Becoming a Doula

Continue reading for more details about the role of doulas, the benefits of having a doula, and the ways that you can get involved with this career path.

What Is a Doula?

Doulas are trained professionals who provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to their clients before, during, and shortly after childbirth to help them achieve the healthiest, most satisfying birthing experience possible - DONA International

Why Are Doulas Important?

Doulas offer various forms of support to a birthing person to provide a positive and safe birth experience. A source of support before, during, and after the birthing process could be a solution to reduce maternal mortality rates and other negative health outcomes.

US Maternal Mortality Rates Are on the Rise

In 2021, the MMR was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births

Black women face a rate 2.6 times higher than the national average

Historical Significance

Although the term “doula” wasn’t coined until the 1970s, historical doulas tended to be female relatives (grandmothers, aunts, cousins, etc) with childrearing and/or birthing experiences. Despite the prevalence of these support roles in practice, becoming a doula as a career only started to become popularized in the 1980s.

Benefits of Having a Doula

A 2022 Retrospective Cohort Study of 298 Women Across 3 States Showed that Doula Care Resulted in:

- 52.9% decrease in the risk of cesarean surgery
- 57.5% decrease in rates of postpartum depression/anxiety
- Babies being four times less likely to have a low birth weight
- Babies and their mothers being two times less likely to experience a birth complication

CDC, 2021

Falconi et al., 2022

TEWA Women United, 2022

https://reprohealth.ucla.edu

@ucla_crshe
crshe@ucla.edu
In the United States, the doula industry is self-regulated, meaning there are no standardized licensing requirements and you can be a doula without being certified. However, in California, doulas can choose to pursue an optional certification process through the California Department of Health Care Services (CA DHCS). This certification can be obtained through either the training pathway or the experience pathway.

### Two Optional Certification Processes in California

**1. Training Pathway**

Must apply to a CA DHCS-approved program, which involves:

- Providing support at 3 births in the capacity of a doula
- Completing a minimum of 16 hours of training on various support measures, such as lactation support, childbirth education, and nonmedical comfort practices

**2. Experience Pathway**

Must show proof of paid/volunteer experience for at least 5 years providing doula-like support

- Provide 3 client testimonials and a letter of recommendation from a professional

32% of doulas are certified via the experience pathway

---

### Doula Scholarships

Listed below are various doula scholarships for people interested in becoming a doula but need financial assistance to get started:

- **Doula Trainings International**
- **Bebo Mia Inc.**
- **The Doula Recruitment Program**
- **Impact Scholarship Program - DONA**

Additionally, many doula training programs have opportunities and discounts for BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ individuals who wish to serve their communities!

---

### What is a Doula’s Average Salary?

In Los Angeles, full-time doulas earn between $60k-80k annually on average. With more experience, doulas are able to increase profits to reach 6 figures!