



HIRING A DOULA

A Guide for Parents

Dear family,

Congratulations on your decision to hire a doula! For birth, postpartum, or both, the support you are about to receive is invaluable. You will likely remember this experience for the rest of your life, and a doula can help make it the experience even more wonderful.

Families who use doulas enjoy many benefits, including drastically reduced risk of cesarean section; reduced rates of interventions like Pitocin, vacuum and forceps deliveries; increased satisfaction with the entire birth experience; better APGAR scores; increased breastfeeding and bonding; and reduced rates of postpartum depression and other mood disorders.



Doulas support, guide and nurture the entire family. Their primary responsibility is to the birthing parent, but they support partners, grandparents and friends, too. Doulas help everyone work together to provide the best possible experience!

In the words of one of our DONA International founders, Dr. John Kennell, “If a doula were a drug, it would be unethical not to use it.”

DONA International is respected worldwide for training and certifying highly skilled, ethical professionals who care deeply about their clients. Look for these DONA International credentials:

CD(DONA): Certified Birth Doula

PCD(DONA): Certified Postpartum Doula

AdvCD(DONA): Advanced Certified Birth Doula AdvPCD(DONA): Advanced Certified Postpartum Doula

BDT(DONA): Approved Birth Doula Trainer

PDT(DONA): Approved Postpartum Doula Trainer

We hope you will find this hiring guide useful. Look it over now and consider taking it with you when you interview your prospective doulas. Best wishes as you welcome your baby or babies into the world!

With care,

All of us at DONA International

Step 1

Create a list of doulas to interview.

- Search our doula database at www.dona.org to find DONA certified doulas near you.
- Ask your friends and family which doula they used for their birth or postpartum experience. Were they happy with the experience?
- Ask your healthcare provider to recommend a few doulas who might be a good fit for you.
- Check with local parenting groups, childbirth educators and community resource groups.

Step 3

Conduct your interview.

- Remember, the purpose of the interview is to see if a particular doula is a good fit for your family. It is also to see if your family is a good fit for the doula. Sometimes you're just not compatible, and that's OK.
- Select from the interview questions included in this packet. You don't have to ask every question on these lists, of course. You might choose a few open-ended questions that will allow you to get to know the personality and style of your prospective doula.

You'll find your perfect doula match, and when it happens, it's often like *magic*.

Look for a level of chemistry, comfort and emotional safety with your doula, as this person will support you during one of the most intimate and important experiences of your life. You can print a copy of this sheet for each doula you interview, if you'd like to take notes.

Step 2

Set interview location and times.

- Pick a few dates for conducting your interviews. Plan no more than an hour for each interview. If you have a partner, try to have that person attend too.
- Reach out to potential doulas via email or phone. Expect to discuss the following items:
 - A little about you and your plans
 - Details you need before setting up the time to meet (fees, availability for your estimated due date)
- A public location, like a coffee shop, is usually a great place to conduct an interview. Avoid conducting interviews in your home.
- If you hold multiple interviews, you can do them back-to-back or spread them out.

Step 4

Sign a contract or sleep on it.

- Sometimes you know it's the right match at the interview. It's fine to sign a contract on the spot, but many families also like to take some time to think about which doula is the right fit.
- If you take a few days to think about it, confirm your decision together and contact your doula!
- Be aware that many doulas are busy and may lose availability if you wait too long to respond.
- As a courtesy, consider contacting the other doulas to let them know you have made the decision to hire a different doula and thank them for their time. Doulas understand and want you to find the right fit for your family.

Birth Doula Interview Worksheet

You can print a copy of this sheet for each doula you interview, if you'd like to take notes.

Background Questions:

- Where did you receive your training and from which organization?
- How long was your training, and how much of it was devoted to supporting families (as opposed to business or other topics)? Have you taken any advanced trainings?
- Are you certified or working toward certification? Why do you value certification?
- Tell me about your experience supporting families as a doula. How long have you been a doula, and how many families have you supported?
- What techniques will you use to help me move through labor?
- How will you support my partner through this process?
- How will you interact with my medical team?

Business & Logistics Questions:

- Will we meet for prenatal visits before the birth, and what is included in those visits?
- When do you consider yourself "on call" 24/7 for my birth? If there is a window of call time, what happens if I deliver before that timeframe begins?
- Will you come to me whenever I need you in labor, or is your support only available after a certain point in the process?
- Will we meet postpartum, and what is included in those visits?
- Are phone, email and text support available before and after the birth?
- Do you have a backup doula for times when you are not available? May we meet your backup?
- What is your fee, and what does it include? Are there any time limits or added fees if I have an unexpectedly long labor?
*Review the doula's contract for refund policies and other details.
- If we decide to hire you, what are our next steps?

Questions to Consider After a Birth Doula Interview

It's a wonderful opportunity to choose a doula to be part of your birth experience! Sometimes, you just know that a particular doula is the one for you, and sometimes you need several interviews to find just the right person (or people—some doulas work in teams). These questions might be helpful as you choose a doula who is the right fit for your family.

- How comfortable was I with the doula/s?
- Did the doula/s communicate well with me and my family?
- Do I feel confident that the doula/s will be able to work collaboratively with my birth team?
- What was the doula's level of knowledge? Did one seem more knowledgeable than another? Did I feel that my questions were answered thoroughly?
- Do I feel comfortable having this doula (these doulas) in my home?
- If there are unexpected situations, or if I need support early in labor, do I feel confident that this doula (these doulas) can offer what I'll need at that time?
- Who is the right doula to nurture and support my family through this process? Did I feel a connection?
- What does my overall intuition say?
- Other notes/observations:

Postpartum Doula Interview Worksheet

You can print a copy of this sheet for each doula you interview, if you'd like to take notes.

Background Questions:

- Where did you receive your training and from which organization?
- How long was your training, and how much of it was devoted to supporting families (as opposed to business or other topics)? Have you taken any advanced trainings?
- Are you certified or working toward certification? Why do you value certification?
- Tell me about your experience supporting families as a doula. How long have you been a doula, and how many families have you supported?
- What kinds of services will you offer in my home? Are there tasks you're not comfortable doing? What might a typical postpartum shift look like?
- How will you support my partner through this process?
- What is your experience with breastfeeding support?

Business & Logistics Questions:

- Will we meet before the baby is born to talk about our needs and your role?
- If we have postpartum questions or concerns before the birth, may we contact you?
- When do your services typically begin after the birth?
- Do you have a backup doula for times when you are not available? May we meet your backup?
- How will we know when our services should end?
- Have you had a criminal background check, a recent TB test and current CPR certification?
- What is your fee, and what does it include? *Review the doula's contract for refund policies and other details.

Questions to Consider After a Postpartum Doula Interview

It's a wonderful opportunity to choose a doula to be part of your fourth trimester with your baby! Sometimes, you just know that a particular doula is the one for you, and sometimes you need several interviews to find just the right person (or people- some doulas work in teams). These questions might be helpful as you choose a postpartum doula who is the right fit for your family.

- How comfortable was I with the doula/s?

- Did the doula/s communicate well with me and my family?

- Do I feel confident that the doula's will be able to support me with feeding my baby?

- What was the doula's level of knowledge? Did one seem more knowledgeable than another? Did I feel that my questions were answered thoroughly?

- Do I feel comfortable having this doula (these doulas) in my home?

- If there are unexpected situations, or if I need support before my baby is born, do I feel confident that this doula (these doulas) can offer what I'll need at that time?

- Who is the right doula to nurture and support my family through this process? Did I feel a connection?

- What does my overall intuition say?

- Other notes/observations: