

Birth Coach Doula Training Program

Comprehensive Doula & Birth Support Certification Syllabus

Program Overview

This training provides a comprehensive foundation in birth support, combining evidence-based knowledge, practical skills, and verbal coaching methodologies for both birth and initial postpartum support. The program includes online coursework, live mentorship, and hands-on practice to prepare participants for professional doula practice.

A. Online Course Component

Total: 15 Classes | Total of 53 hours

Course Modules

Introduction: Foundations of Doula Practice - 2.5 hours

- Historical and cultural approaches to maternal care
- Modern birth support: patients' rights and the emergence of the doula profession
- Scope of practice - introducing obstetric agents and learning professional boundaries
- Professional ethics and standards of practice
- Evidence-based benefits and outcomes of doula care
- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive care
- Individualization of care: communication, advocacy, and shared decision-making

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Module 1: Pregnancy physiology and Prenatal Care - 5 hours

- Maternal anatomy
- Pregnancy physiology and common physiological adaptations
- Preparing families for birth
- Birth planning
- Evidence-informed approaches for physiological labor initiation
- Client education
- Fetal positions
- Prenatal visits - education, emotional and mental preparation, preparing partners, optimal fetal positions exercises

Module 2: Physiology of Childbirth and Childbirth Education Fundamentals - 5 hours

- Physiology of childbirth
- Childbirth Education Fundamentals: contraction patterns, dilation, effacement, and common signs of labor progress
- Understanding the Fear–Tension–Pain response and its relationship to coping and labor progress

Module 3: Labor Stages and Phases - 4 hours

- Symptoms of the different stages and phases of childbirth
- The doula's role in childbirth: promoting confidence, effective coping, and physiological support during labor

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Modules 4-7 focus on hands-on support techniques and emotional support during the different phases of labor.

Each labor support technique is taught within the context of the physiology and biomechanics of labor. Students learn to select and adapt comfort measures according to the specific stage and phase of labor, supporting maternal coping, fetal positioning and rotation, engagement, descent, and the efficient progression of normal labor. Each module teaches the following coping techniques, focusing on coping and progress.

• Positioning • Breathing techniques • Movement • Massage techniques • Hydrotherapy • Visualization/ guided imagery • Counterpressure • Rebozo	• Birth ball • Peanut ball • Vocalization • Relaxation • TENS • Affirmation • Partner's engagement • Atmosphere changes

Module 4: Comfort Measures & Coping Techniques during the Early Phase - 3 hours

- Goals of support during early labor
- Evidence-informed comfort measures and positioning
- Communication and emotional support
- When and how to transition from clients' home to L&D
- Supporting fetal positioning and labor progress
- When to arrive at clients' home and how long to stay

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Module 5: Comfort Measures & Coping Techniques during the Early Phase - 4 hours

- Physiological changes during active labor
- Adapting support techniques to increasing labor intensity- hydrotherapy and vocalization
- Comfort measures for active labor
- Promoting fetal rotation, engagement, and descent with movement
- Supporting labor progress and coping
- Coaching clients through moments of doubt and fear

Module 6: Comfort Measures & Coping Techniques during the Transition Phase - 3 hours

- Physiological changes in the transition phase
- Adapting support techniques to increasing labor intensity
- Coaching clients through moments of doubt and fear
- Supporting labor progress and coping

Module 7: Comfort Measures & Coping Techniques during the Second Stage - 5 hours

- Physiology and biomechanics of the second stage of labor
- Evidence-based maternal positioning during the second stage of labor and its impact on fetal descent, birth outcomes, and maternal comfort
- Promoting optimal pelvic dimensions through breath, movement, and positioning
- Supporting optimal fetal positioning and rotation during descent
- Recognizing maternal urges and supporting physiological pushing with breath and positions
- Supporting the perineum prenatally and throughout the second stage
- Partner involvement and communication with the birth team
- Variations of the second stage and common medical interventions
- Emotional support, encouragement, and maintaining a calm birth environment
- Nonmedical approaches to support physiological placental birth
- Immediate postpartum doula support: facilitating skin-to-skin contact and early breastfeeding

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Module 8+9: Medical Context of Birth - 8 hours

- Triage procedures
- Monitoring - types, methods, evidence on birth outcomes
- Induction
- Epidural
- Managing meconium
- Cesarean
- Assisted birth
- Episiotomy and perineal massage
- Informed consent and patient-centered advocacy

Module 10: Communication, Advocacy, and Shared Decision-Making - 2.5 hours

- The Birth Coach Method™ Advocacy Model: A client-centered advocacy approach that empowers informed decision-making, strengthens self-advocacy skills, and supports individuals in communicating their values, preferences, and needs throughout the perinatal journey with their doulas' masterful support.
- Rapport-building techniques and trust-centered communication
- Coaching skills to facilitate reflection, clarity, confidence, and client agency
- Leading co-active conversations that promote collaboration

Module 11: The Newborn - 2.5 hours

- Newborn transition
- APGAR
- Newborn instincts

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Module 12: Postpartum Care - 3 hours

- Physical recovery and hormonal changes
- Emotional adjustment
- Partner's engagement
- Sleep
- Postpartum Wellness Framework (NURSE): Nourishment, Understanding, Rest and relaxation, Spirituality, Exercise
- Family support - coaching parents on building their postpartum support group and plan

Module 13: Lactation Support & Breastfeeding Education - 3.5 hours

- Anatomy and physiology of lactation
- Initiating breastfeeding and establishing milk supply
- Evidence-based breastfeeding positions and latch support
- Recognizing effective milk transfer and signs of adequate intake
- Common breastfeeding challenges and supportive strategies
    - Tongue tie and oral restrictions
    - Inverted or flat nipples, sore nipples
    - Engorgement
    - Plugged ducts, breast inflammation, and mastitis: recognition, comfort measures, and referral pathways
    - Low milk supply concerns and appropriate support
    - Pumping, milk expression, and safe milk storage
- When and how to refer to lactation professionals and healthcare providers

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Module 14: Establishing a Thriving Professional Practice - 2.5 hours

- Establishing Your Doula Practice:
    - Certification
    - NPI
    - Business license
    - Liability insurance
    - Client contract
    - Reimbursement - Medi-Cal, Kaiser, Carrot, and more

B. Live Mentorship Sessions

Total: 6 Sessions | 18 Hours

These live, interactive sessions foster a sense of community while offering case-based learning, hands-on coaching practice, and real-time mentorship. The purpose is to help students translate theoretical knowledge into confident, effective application in their doula practice. We also ensure students experience the benefits of belonging to a community, motivating them to create and maintain a community resource directory and connect families with local organizations, groups, and providers.

Session Topics

- Agents, roles, and approaches in birth support
- Historical, contemporary, and lifestyle challenges faced by expectant individuals
- Pre-labor signs and membrane rupture
- Communication strategies before arriving at client homes
- Fetal presentations and positions: Practical doula support
- Assessing and promoting labor progress
- Supporting clients in early labor
- Labor induction: Prevention and informed decision-making
- Medical induction methods and alternatives

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- Supporting clients during active labor
- Supporting clients during the transition phase
- Scenario-based practice
- Informed consent in birth settings
- Supporting clients during the second stage of delivery
- Introduction to perinatal coaching
- Community Resource Navigation:
    - Developing and maintaining a local resource directory
    - Maternal mental health resources
    - Lactation support resources
    - Public health programs
    - Parenting education and support groups
    - Domestic violence and safety resources
- Guest speaker: Labor & Delivery Nurse – Collaboration and Communication in L&D

C. Hands-On In-Person Workshops

Total: 2 Workshops | 8 Hours

Workshop Focus

- Practice of labor support techniques
- Comfort measures for each stage of labor, integrating support props such as a physio ball, a peanut ball, a rebozo, massage tools, a TENS unit, and others.
- Hands-on skill building (positioning, movement, touch, and partner support)
- Integration of verbal coaching and physical support tools

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D. Practical Experience (Clinical Integration)

Hands-On Client Experience with Professional Mentorship

As part of the certification pathway, a structured matching program is offered in collaboration with medical birth practitioners, bridging training and real-world practice by placing students with their first clients in a guided, supportive environment with on-site mentorship from participating providers.

Program Components

- Matching up to two clients to support continuity of care from prenatal through postpartum
- Collaboration with affiliated medical birth providers (e.g., L&D nurses, midwives, physicians)
- On-site mentorship and observational learning within clinical and birth settings

Learning Objectives

- Apply theoretical knowledge and practical skills in real-life birth scenarios.
- Develop confidence in providing continuous labor support
- Practice communication and collaboration within interdisciplinary care teams
- Strengthen professional identity and scope of practice as a doula

Learning Outcomes
By the end of this program, participants will be able to:

- Explain the anatomy and physiology of pregnancy, labor, birth, and the postpartum period.
- Deliver evidence-informed childbirth education to expectant families.
- Provide prenatal, labor, birth, and immediate postpartum doula support.
- Apply a broad range of nonmedical comfort measures during labor.
- Provide evidence-based lactation support and breastfeeding education within the doula scope of practice.
- Develop and maintain a community resource directory and connect clients with appropriate local services.
- Collaborate effectively with interdisciplinary maternity care teams.

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- Practice within the professional scope, ethics, and standards of doula care.
- Establish and sustain a professional doula practice.
- Support informed decision-making and client autonomy while maintaining collaboration with medical teams.
- Create and maintain a community resource directory and connect families with appropriate local support services.
- Support new parents during the postpartum period
- Integrate coaching strategies into birth support practices

Program Structure Summary

- **Online Classes:** 53 hours
- **Live Mentorship:** 18 hours
- **Hands-On Workshops:** 8 hours
- **Practical Experience**: Supporting two persons prenatally, throughout their birth, and in the PP period.

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