

Doula Services

TX RPC Project Legislative Rapid Response Request

March 22, 2023

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Doulas can provide support and serve as a liaison between pregnant women and their prenatal care providers.
2. Doula support can improve birth outcomes and reduce pregnancy complications leading to healthcare cost-savings.
3. Nine states and the District of Columbia currently cover prenatal, labor and delivery, and postpartum doula services for women enrolled in Medicaid.
4. Pilot programs in Texas testing the effectiveness of doula-Medicaid partnerships show positive impacts on pregnancy and delivery.

What are Doulas? What do they do?

Doulas are non-clinical health professionals who provide physical, emotional, and educational support to women and their families before, during, and after labor and delivery. (1, 2) Doulas do not provide medical care but are knowledgeable about many medical aspects of pregnancy and can play an important role on the maternal healthcare team.

PRENATAL

- Translate medical information
- Help mothers clarify their goals
- Communicate needs to their provider (1)

LABOR & DELIVERY

- Assist with pain relief, breathing techniques, and relaxation
- Facilitate communication with the maternal healthcare team (1)

POSTPARTUM

- Share information on infant feeding, recovery from childbirth, and coping skills for new parents (3)

Benefits of Receiving Doula Services

Having the extra support from a doula through pregnancy can prevent the occurrence of pregnancy-related emergencies outside the hospital, and ensure the mother and baby receive faster care. (4)

Studies show that doulas are associated with improved birth outcomes and fewer pregnancy complications: (5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

- Shortened labor times
- Lower use of epidurals
- Lower rates of cesarean births
- Lower odds of postpartum depression
- Fewer low birthweight babies
- Increased satisfaction with the birth experience
- Higher breastfeeding initiation rates

State Medicaid programs may experience cost-savings as a result of these improved birth outcomes. (10) Previous analyses have shown: (11, 12)

- Cost-savings resulting from doula support averaged at \$986 per birth
- Cost-effectiveness was as high as \$1360 per doula



Other States Providing Doula Services Through Medicaid

Nine states and the District of Columbia have implemented Medicaid reimbursement structures that typically cover a set number of doula visits during the prenatal and/or postpartum periods, as well as flat rates for doula services in labor & delivery. (10, 13)

TRICARE -- the healthcare program of the U.S. Department of Defense that provides health benefits for military service members, retirees, and their dependents -- covers services from non-medical labor doulas as well (6, 14, 15)



Doula Programs in Texas

A pilot program covering the cost of doula services for women enrolled in Medicaid was launched in 2021. Non-profit organizations in Austin, Beaumont, Brazos Valley, and Rio Grande Valley received grant funding through the pilot program to provide doula services throughout their communities. (4, 16)

Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS), one of the nonprofits that received pilot grant funds, provided 127 families in Central Texas with birth support during the pilot phase. Many families received over 20 total hours of doula services, and virtually all of them -- **and their healthcare providers** -- reported the birth being better because of the doula support provided by GALS. (17)



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