



Doula Training Programs vs. Core Competencies

Developed for the HUSKY Health Maternity Bundle Payment Doula Integration Toolkit

Background for this document

The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) plans to implement a Maternity Bundle Payment program (called “the bundle” for the remainder of this document) for the HUSKY Health program beginning January 2024, pending federal approval. The bundle is part of DSS’ overarching goal to move toward paying for equitable care in a value-based way. In addition to providing a new payment structure, DSS has allocated additional funds for doula and lactation support services as an integral component of the bundle. Doula and lactation support services will be rendered and reimbursed under the medical provider through the bundle.

How to use this tool

Providers will need to identify how to credential doulas for participation in the bundled payment. It is recommended that providers rely on Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) certification; the core competencies for DPH certification can be found [here](#). While DPH certification is being established and doulas are beginning to be certified in 2023-24, or in the event a provider chooses not to rely on the DPH certification process, providers can review the following information to better understand how prevalent training programs and/or those based in Connecticut meet the core competencies [as identified by the Doula Advisory Committee convened by DPH] to inform their credentialing efforts.

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Overview of Doula Training Programs

DSS plans to implement a [Maternity Bundle Payment program](#) in January 2024. As part of the maternity bundle, doula support services will be available to HUSKY Health members through their providers. Providers will contract with doulas, supervise their practice, and reimburse them for their services through per member per month payments they receive from DSS. Providers will be responsible for credentialing doulas to determine the qualifications necessary for doulas to work in their practices and receive payment.

Importantly, [Public Act No. 23-147](#) was passed in the 2023 legislative session in Connecticut requiring DPH to develop and implement certification of doulas. A formal mechanism is now being developed for doula certification. However, DPH certification will *not* be required for doulas to participate in the bundle payment. Instead, providers may choose to rely on DPH certification as their qualification mechanism or may choose to develop their own set of requirements for doula practice.

Regardless of the certification mechanism, DSS, maternity providers, and HUSKY Health members all want and need to know that the doulas providing support services have the knowledge, skills, and training necessary to render such support. DPH established a Doula Advisory Committee as required by [Public Act Number 22-58](#), made up of a broad coalition of maternity stakeholders from across the state. The committee established the [Core Competencies](#) a doula must have in order to be state certified. These competencies provide an ideal framework for practices choosing to create their own certification process in lieu of relying on DPH certification.

While the certification is being formalized, providers will also be responsible for credentialing the doulas who are to work with their patients. The success of the Maternity Bundle Payment program will be dependent upon a robust workforce of doulas willing and able to work with providers and render doula services. The workforce will start with doulas who are already trained and able to serve. Based on doula responses received from surveys and interviews conducted during the Connecticut Doula Landscape Analysis (compiled by Primary Maternity Care and Health Equity Solutions), Connecticut doulas primarily receive their doula training from the doula training organizations listed in Exhibit A. To assist providers in credentialing doulas for participation in the bundle, in line with the DPH core competencies, the following table shows how the curricula of the most common training programs compare to the core competencies established by the DPH Doula Advisory Committee.

It is recommended that practices rely on DPH certification as the qualifying factor to determine who is eligible to work as a doula. If DPH certification is not in place when providers need to begin to work with doulas, it is recommended that providers rely on the DPH core competencies and plan to have doulas obtain state certification when it becomes available.

Note: *Doulas do not have to meet these standards to continue private practice in the state of Connecticut.*

This assessment is based on self-reporting by program faculty through a [survey tool](#) developed by Primary Maternity Care, in collaboration with DSS and Community Health Network of Connecticut, Inc[®] (CHNCT), using the DPH competencies, as of April 2023. The DONA Birth and Postpartum Doula Trainings do not have a centralized curriculum and therefore were completed by PMC; see notes below chart.

Exhibit A - Doula Training Programs vs. DPH Draft Core Competencies, as of July 2023

	Pregnancy and Childbirth	Postpartum, Recovery & Newborn Periods	Promotes Health Equity	Expected & Unexpected Pregnancy Outcomes	Racial Equity	Advocacy	Required # of births attended for certification	Number of years as an independent organization	Number of Doulas Trained (to date)
CAPPA**	X	X	X	X	X		3	25	3,700+
Bridges and Boundaries Doula and Birth Professional Training	X	X	X	X	X	X	2*	7	183
DONA**	X	X					3	29	14,500 doulas certified in 2022
Earth's Natural Touch: Birth Care & Beyond	X	X	X	X	X	X	***	7	187
Mabriella+	X	X		X			3	17	3,000+ people trained and certified
Diary of a Doula (FKA Mama Warrior Doula Training)	X	X	X	X	X	X	3	6	152
Women's Choice Perinatal Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	2	1	32

*Bridges and Boundaries training requires doula trainees to attend two births for certification; one that is supervised and one that the trainee attends alone.

This tool was created by Primary Maternity Care 2023 for the "HUSKY Health Maternity Bundle Payment Doula Integration Toolkit." It may be adapted for use with attribution.

**Information related to competencies was not provided by DONA or CAPPa, but instead acquired through reviewing their published certification standards and knowledge of their program.

- DONA International Birth and Postpartum doula training were the most common doula training attended by doulas in Connecticut. However, DONA does not have a specified doula training curriculum. Doula trainees are required to read books about different topics such as pregnancy, birth and postpartum support, breastfeeding support, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, and business development prior to attending a weekend hands-on skills training. What is covered during the hands-on skills training varies greatly depending on the trainer, and whether health equity, racial equity, and advocacy topics are included is also dependent upon the trainer. Based on the suggested readings and hands-on skills training, DONA certified doulas will need to demonstrate training and/or proficiency in health equity, expected and unexpected outcomes, racial equity, and advocacy prior to state certification.
- CAPPa birth doula training has a specified curriculum which is published in the required study manuals. Participants are required to read and comprehend the information in the manuals, complete the learning exercises, and reinforce the information read during the live/virtual birth doula training session. CAPPa offers a Health Equity e-book as part of their labor doula curriculum, includes racial and health equity in their curriculum, and incorporates a health equity section in their reading list. CAPPa does not offer training in advocacy; doulas who have gone through CAPPa need to demonstrate proficiency and/or take advocacy education training.

***Earth's Natural Touch: Birth Care and Beyond's Interdisciplinary Doula Training does not require trainees to attend a specified number of births for certification due to multiple racial, social, and systemic barriers, but trainees can complete any number of births prior to certification if they are able to — supervised or independently.

+Madiella, as an international doula training organization, does not require attendance at any births for its doula certification. However, they advise their trainees on the various U.S. state requirements when they enroll, and if those requirements include attendance at births, they support the trainees through the process of attending births and maintain documentation of the completed births in the trainee's certification file. Madiella has separate birth and postpartum doula trainings, and to meet the core competencies, a doula needs to have taken both programs to qualify for state certification. They do not offer training in health equity, racial equity, or advocacy, so doulas who have gone through Madiella need to demonstrate proficiency and/or take racial equity, health equity, and advocacy education training.

Summary and Recommendations

Based on the comparisons to the DPH Core Competencies, Bridges and Boundaries, Earth's Natural Touch: Birth Care & Beyond, Diary of a Doula Embodied Doula Training (formerly known as Mama Warrior), and Women's Choice Perinatal Doula Training all meet the DPH core competencies as currently understood, although any final decision regarding DPH certification can only be made by DPH. Providers should feel confident that doulas certified by these organizations have the training to work as a professional doula for Medicaid reimbursement without any other training requirements.

Madriella trained doulas need to demonstrate and/or undergo training in health equity, racial equity, and advocacy prior to being approved to serve HUSKY Health members and eventually meet DPH certification standards. The following organizations offer training in health equity, racial equity, and advocacy, and being Connecticut-based, should be first in line for filling gaps in training: Bridges and Boundaries, Earth's Natural Touch: Birth Care & Beyond, Diary of a Doula Embodied Doula Training, and Women's Choice Perinatal Doula Training.

DONA trained and certified doulas need to be able to demonstrate competency in health equity, expected and unexpected outcomes, racial equity, and advocacy prior to being prepared to serve HUSKY Health members and eventually meeting DPH certification standards. Candidates for doula certification should seek out training opportunities with the Connecticut-based training organizations to fill these gaps.

CAPPA trained and certified doulas need to be able to demonstrate competency in advocacy prior to being prepared to serve HUSKY Health members and eventually meeting DPH certification standards. Candidates for doula certification should seek out training opportunities with the Connecticut-based training organizations to fill these gaps.

According to an analysis of a wide range of doula training programs, most programs do require that trainees attend births prior to certification, and the average number of births required is three. Based on that data, it is recommended that doulas who are seeking state certification have documentation or verification that they have attended at least three births where they provided physical and emotional support and comfort measures to a childbearing person and their support team.

Final Note: The draft DPH competency requirements as of 4/28/23 were used as the basis for assessing training programs. Prior to a formal certification process, these competency requirements could change. Additionally, the competency outline did not specify exact numbers of required hours on each topic, which will become clearer as a formal DPH certification process is established. This tool was prepared as thoroughly as possible while acknowledging the limitations of the current DPH certification information on hand.