



PALS Doulas Standards of Practice

I. Scope

A. **Services Rendered.** The Doula accompanies their client continuously while in labor, gives emotional and physical support, suggests comfort measures, and offers encouragement and suggestions for both the client and any other support people. Whenever possible, the doula delivers prenatal and postpartum emotional support, including explanation and discussion of practices and procedures throughout the course of service.

B. **Limits to Practice:** The Doula does not perform invasive clinical tasks such as cervical exams, injections, or intravenous (IV) care. Doulas who have received training may assist clients with performing non-invasive clinical care tasks, such as: blood pressure measurements, temperature checks, assessments of postpartum bleeding, and newborn weight checks. These tasks are conditionally appropriate when recommended by clients' medical care providers. The Doula does not initiate non-invasive clinical care tasks nor interpret the results.

C. **Advocacy:** The Doula supports each client's values and goals during prenatal conversations, intrapartum and postpartum discussions, and birth planning. The Doula supports clients' advocacy of those values and goals at all times. The Doula supports communication and shared decision-making between clients and their care providers by encouraging clients to ask questions, share values and goals, and incorporate changes in plans. Doulas who have received training, have demonstrated skill and experience, and/or have longer-term culturally congruent relationships of trust such as Community Based Doulas or Outreach Doulas, may speak on behalf of their clients. This is always conditional on the permission of the client with the goal of client empowerment, self-advocacy, autonomy, and agency to cultivate an equitable, safe environment. Doulas do not participate in activities that decrease clients' autonomy, agency, or ability to self-advocate, including speaking on behalf of the client without their permission or making decisions for the client.

II. Continuity of Care

A. **Back-up.** The Doula will provide a back-up doula to ensure continuous services to the client if the Doula is unavailable. This includes following up with the client and backup doula to make sure the client's needs are addressed.

B. **Referrals.** For client needs beyond the scope of the Doula's training or knowledge, referrals are offered to appropriate resources to the best of their ability.

C. **Transfer of Care.** If the Doula finds it necessary to discontinue service with an established client before labor, it is the Doula's responsibility to notify the client in writing and if appropriate, arrange for a replacement if the client so desires.



III. Certification and Recertification

A. Certification. Doulas certified by PALS will have the experience as set forth in the PALS Requirements for Certification. A vote of the Board of Directors finalizes certification.

B. Recertification. Doulas certified by PALS are required to recertification annually. Completion of a PALS Competency Assessment, submission of 6 continuing education credits (1 of which must be focused on social justice/equity/anti-racism work), review and renewal signature of the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, Values, Mission, and Vision statements, recertification interview, and birth data from the previous 12 months must be submitted.

IV. Record Keeping

A. Documentation. The Certified Doula maintains clear and accurate records of each client relationship and the birth. While not currently bound by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), PALS Doulas recommends adhering to the privacy practices set out in HIPAA¹.

B. Data Collection. The Doula will collect data on each birth attended and submit that data to PALS. The data is used for doula advocacy, statistics, and marketing.²

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/index.html>

² Subject to change: Doulas are asked to submit a yearly summary of birth attended vs a Data Collection Form.