



Dear Parents,

We are so happy to be teamed up with Best Start Birth Center, providing well trained doulas for your family! Doulas have been shown to shorten labor time, lower the need for medication and surgical births. Mamas open up better in their home environment and with the support of a professional, both parents feel safer staying home longer. Now let's have a great birth!

**LOW COST Program:**

The LOW COST doulas are offered to Best Start parents first. The doulas in our low cost program are fully trained by a national or international organization first before they enter our program. They are working towards their certification by extended study and attending at least three births that count toward certification. You can help with this by inviting them to attend your birth and filing out a quick evaluation on them.

Our doulas take their education and training very seriously and want nothing more than to help you have the birth that you desire. Each doula also has a mentor, allowing her to learn even more from a seasoned doula. This is the most complete education your doula can attain in San Diego and we are thrilled to be able to share this service with you.

**COST:**

The LOW COST doulas are \$300 and are on a first come first served basis. We would ask that if you can afford to spend a little more than \$300, that you leave the LOW COST doulas available for families with smaller incomes so that everyone has the opportunity for a doula. We can still provide a matching service for you and are happy to do so. Please go to our website for more information on our matching service.

**Where to Start:**

- Fill out the **Disclaimer** form – on our website – you will find it under “Doulas”

Once the form is received, you will receive questionnaire that gives us a little background on your family so we can effectively match you with two doulas to interview (when available). Please return as soon as you can.

Once you have selected a doula, you will meet with her to sign her contract and pay her fee. You will pay the doula directly.

**What is required of you:**

You will need to fill out an evaluation form that is required for the doula's certification process. The doula will give it to you after the birth to fill out. It takes seconds to do.

The BEC will then send you a quick **evaluation form** to share a few things about your experience. If you enjoyed your experience with your doula, we would love for you to [YELP](#) review her and give her a testimonial that she can use on her website. No names unless you wish.

Please email any questions to:

**Doulas@BirthEducationCenter.com**

We suggest that you attain a doula as soon as you can – this is a first come first served program. Thank you for choosing us to help! More info on our website!

Love – the BEC Doula Team



Hey All – As an educator, I cannot stress enough the importance of a doula at your birth. Especially if you are planning a natural birth. Parents are just more pleased with their birth experience when a doula is there to support them. They also tend to have shorter, more comfortable labors when they are supported by a professional. I have included some more information on what doulas do, an article on common myths about doulas, list of questions you can ask when interviewing. We suggest meeting with at least three so you know you have picked the perfect one for you.

Doulas are not offended when you choose someone else – they know they are not a perfect fit for every birth! As a doula myself, I just want you to have someone there who has seen birth and all that it entails so that you can relax and do what you are to do! Doulas range in price and will usually work with you if you want to payments. CALL AS SOON AS YOU CAN – especially if you are due around ANY holidays. Doulas fill quickly and you want to be on the calendar! We are happy to answer any questions you have about specific doulas or help you in your search. Email: [Doulas@BirthEducationCenter.com](mailto:Doulas@BirthEducationCenter.com)

Numerous [clinical studies](#) have found that a doula's presence at birth

- tends to result in shorter labors with fewer complications
- reduces negative feelings about one's childbirth experience
- reduces the mother's request for pain medication and/or epidurals
- reduces the need for pitocin (a labor-inducing drug), forceps or vacuum extraction and cesareans

[Research](#) shows parents who receive support can:

- Feel more secure and cared for
- Are more successful in adapting to new family dynamics
- Have greater success with breastfeeding
- Have greater self-confidence
- Have less postpartum depression
- Have lower incidence of abuse

Here is a little tip from the DONA website(Doulas of North America):

### **Check credentials and references.**

If the doula is a DONA International certified doula, you can confirm her certification by using our online doula locator. DONA International certification is a meaningful measure of a doula's commitment and professionalism.

### **Conduct an in-person interview.**

It is a good idea for both you and your partner to meet doula candidates to decide if they are compatible with your family. Are they kind, warm and enthusiastic? Are they knowledgeable? Do they communicate well? Are they good listeners? Are they comfortable with your choices or do they seem to have their own agenda? Do you feel at ease with them? The way that you feel with a doula is more important than the number of births that they have attended or how many new families they have nurtured. You may want to interview more than one doula and make comparisons before choosing your doula.

Here is the [DONA Website](#) for more information... <http://www.dona.org/>



## Low Cost Doula Program The Birth Education Center of San Diego

*Jessica English is a doula, natural childbirth instructor and the owner of [Birth Kalamazoo](#). Her two boys were both born naturally into their daddy's hands, one in the hospital and one at home. She had doula support for both journeys, of course. Jessica moonlights in freelance writing and public relations, but feels lucky to call birth her day (and night) job.*

As doulas become more common on birth teams around the world, I get fewer blank stares when I tell people what I do. Most people have at least a nominal sense of what a doula does, even if the lines are a bit fuzzy for them. Over the years, however, I've noticed some common misconceptions about doulas and their role in birth. Because I hear these myths again and again, allow me to debunk a few for you.

### **Myth #1: A doula would interfere with the bond between my husband/partner and me in labor.**

Your partner in life makes an ideal birth partner. He or she knows you best, and that bond can't be replaced by a doula - or anyone else - in labor. Doulas don't come into a birth and take over.

A good doula actually facilitates involvement. We can remind your partner about what you learned in class. Hips hurting? Here, I know a great technique for that. Dad, try this. We can also complement a partner's strengths. I've been to births where the dad fell into a really natural role as mom's physical support, and I offered more verbal reassurance. Even with great prep beforehand, he just might not know what to say.

Because we've studied and often seen a lot of births, doulas can be invaluable in unexpected situations. Has labor slowed down? Dad might not think about nipple stimulation, stair climbing, acupressure, visualization or thumb sucking (yes, thumb sucking). We also carry a great bag of tricks. My own doula bag includes goodies like tennis balls for counter-pressure, peppermint oil to combat nausea, a gardening knee pad for kneeling dads, and mouthwash to refresh anyone on the birth team when mom's senses are incredibly heightened.

Doulas make sure dads take care of themselves too, with comfort measures and breaks during a long birth. Even the most amazing birth partner needs to eat and pee every once in awhile! We can reassure him when things are going normally, and help interpret and demystify hospital protocol. We're *his* doula too.

And finally, if the two of you are working beautifully together, we're skilled at backing off and letting that happen. I don't feel lost in moments of just observing. There's still real value in simply honoring and protecting a couple's birth space.

### **Myth #2: If I have a midwife, I don't need a doula.**

Most of my clients birth with midwives. While it's true that doulas and midwives do share some common skills and goals, their roles are actually quite different. A doula is your sounding board from the minute you hire her. She'll help you process your hopes and fears about the pregnancy and birth, answer questions and connect you with resources. If you just need to talk every day for a week, she'll be there. You never have to wait for your next scheduled visit.

And unless you're having a homebirth, even the best midwife won't meet you in your living room and support



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you through *early* labor. Doulas often connect with their clients at home, laboring with them there, and helping them with the transition to the hospital or birth center. After arriving at your birth place, a midwife can't guarantee you'll be her only patient in labor. Your doula is there for you, and **only you**.

Midwives offer birth knowledge and suggestions for coping with labor, as do doulas. However, a midwife's final responsibility rests with the health of mom and baby. At a certain point in almost every birth (and sometimes at many points), a midwife must turn her attention from support to the medical aspects of birth. She watches for complications, advises on interventions or approaches, and serves as medical guardian.

A doula doesn't perform any clinical tasks and stays focused solely on support. She nurtures you in the calm and beautiful spells, and also if there are any frantic, scary moments. "You're doing such an amazing job, this is normal." "I trust your decision-making process." "Stay strong, you're almost there." "Listen to your body." "Don't be scared, we're here with you."

### **Myth #3: My doula will protect me against the hospital staff.**

Not even the best doula can "save" a couple from an interventionist doctor, midwife or hospital. It is up to you to advocate for yourselves, and make your wishes known to the staff.

First of all, a doula can be kicked out of a birthing room very quickly if she steps on any toes. Second, we might have to work with these same people again next week or next month—to serve our clients well, it's best not to have an antagonistic relationship.

That's not to say that a doula can't play a more subtle advocacy role. The first thing we might do is to help you figure out if the practice you're with is a good match for your birth goals, and if not, help identify another provider who might be more complementary. We'll also encourage you to talk with your provider about all your hopes and expectations beforehand, so there's less chance of any surprise at the actual birth.

During birth, we can remind you of your birth plan, share what we know about options, suggest questions, and help you sort through your feelings and priorities. I've also given couples a gentle "heads up" when I've seen a medical intervention about to be performed without their consent. And when the pressure is on to make a medical decision, assuming it's not an emergency, a doula can suggest some time alone to think and talk. Just removing the pressure of someone standing over you, waiting for an immediate answer, can help a couple think through their options and priorities with clear heads.

### **Myth #4: I can't afford a doula.**

We spend incredible amounts of money on preparing for a baby in this country. Dare I say it, many of those dollars go toward unnecessary accoutrements. Pretty much, for a newborn, you need diapers, some onesies and a breast. A sling is handy. That's it. Your baby will never miss that fancy diaper stacker, sticker-shock crib, or those adorable matching baskets. By comparison, women process their births for their entire lives. And unnecessary interventions can have long-lasting emotional and physical effects for mom and baby. We get one chance to birth our babies. So for many couples, affording a doula is merely a matter of shifting priorities.



In almost every community, if you truly want birth support, there is a doula in your price range. Doula work is demanding and doesn't usually pay very well. Still, many are willing to adjust their fees on a sliding scale for low-income mothers. Bartering and payment plans are also common. If the doula you first approach doesn't do pro-bono work, or has reached her limit, she can usually help connect you with a new doula who will work at a very low cost as she gains experience. Call doula certifying organizations like [DONA International](#) for a list of doulas working toward certification, or visit [DoulaMatch](#) and [DoulaConnect](#) to find doulas working in your state and local area.

**Myth #5: All doulas wear patchouli and long skirts and they only like natural birth.**

This one's easy to debunk, since I'm living proof. Patchouli gives me a headache, and I can't remember the last time I wore a skirt. Some doulas are crunchy, some look a lot like your grandma or your banker, and some of us are more of the soccer-mom set.

As for going natural, you can find doulas who had medicated births or cesarean births themselves. Many doulas feel comfortable supporting any couple, no matter what kind of birth they're hoping for.

Others, and I include myself in this group, have a true love for natural birth, but also a strong sense of compassion for women faced with challenging situations or true medical complications. We're not in *your* body, and we can't completely know what the labor experience is like for you. Medications and interventions, while vastly overused, certainly have their place. The core of a doula's role is **support** - support for your decision-making process and your innate wisdom about the best path for your birth. I've witnessed some truly beautiful births that included Pitocin, narcotics, epidurals, and even c-sections.

A good doula nurtures and supports you on your birth journey, wherever it leads you. One of my clients told me after her VBAC that during her birth she felt surrounded in love. That's much more important to me than whether someone experiences my idealized version of a "perfect birth." If every family I work with feels surrounded in love, I've done my job.

If you think a doula is overpriced – please consider the following article...

Let's just break down one of my packages in terms of time that I spend with my clients during the course of their pregnancy, labor, and postpartum:

**Pregnancy and Labor Package**

Initial consultation meeting – Approximately 2 hours

Two prenatal meetings (One can be at a prenatal appointment to meet your caregiver.) Approximately 4 hours

Birth Plan Assistance – Average, off and on, 1-2 hours

ASAP telephone, text, and email support during contact hours (8am-8pm) Average 4 hours  
24/7 on call within 2 weeks of your estimated due date –

**Can you really put a time on that?**



Around the clock Labor and Birth support once labor has begun – 10+ hours

Pictures of labor and birth with my camera as well as yours

Immediate postpartum support of approximately 2-3 hours, or until the baby has nursed successfully and the family is settled – 2-3 hours

One postpartum visit to discuss your birth, share photos, dote over your new arrival, discuss options for additional support (breastfeeding, cloth diapering, baby wearing, etc.) – Approximately 2 hours

With these approximations, we're looking at about 25 hours, in the least, just for interaction with my clients. If you add in another estimated 3 hours for research, paperwork, etc., that goes into setting up each client, we're at 28 hours.

### **Travel**

The average trip I make to meet with clients is approximately 30-40 miles one way. These estimates are based on this Miles Per Dollar Calculator and my vehicle.

Trip time (based on 5 trips) – 7.5 hours

Gas costs (based on 35 miles one way – 5 trips) – \$53.75

### **Childcare & Food Costs**

Childcare – Approximately \$100 per client including visits and birth

Food During Birth – Approximately \$10 depending on the length of birth

### **Miscellaneous Costs**

Hospital Parking and tolls – Approximately \$10

Materials for Clients – Approximately \$5

Credit Card or Paypal Fees (if you accept this form of payment – Thanks Robin!) – Approximately 2%- 3%

### **Total Time and Out of Pocket Expenses**

Time – 36 hours

Childcare – \$100

Food – \$10

Gas – \$54

Misc – \$15

### **Let's do the Math - Remember the Taxes**

Don't forget that you're looking at state or federal tax (depending on where you live and what bracket you fall into) and you also the 13.3% Self Employment Tax (that's the state of Texas – 10.4% for Social Security and 2.9% for Medicare). Thank you, Susan, for reminding me!

This is figured for the State of Texas and DOES NOT include Income Tax because that would depend on your tax bracket.

**Doula Fee – \$400**

Less Expenses - (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) - \$221

Approximately \$6.14 per hour (not even minimum wage) – \$53.20 Self Employment Tax

**Doula Fee – \$500**

Less Expenses – (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) – \$321

Approximately \$8.92 per hour – \$66.50 Self Employment Tax

**Doula Fee – \$600**

Less Expenses - (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) - \$421

Approximately \$11.69 per hour – \$79.80 Self Employment Tax

**Doula Fee – \$700**

Less Expenses - (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) - \$521

Approximately \$14.47 per hour – \$93.10 Self Employment Tax

**Doula Fee – \$800**

Less Expenses - (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) - \$621

Approximately \$17.25 per hour – \$106.40 Self Employment Tax

**Doula Fee – \$900**

Less Expenses - (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) - \$721

Approximately \$20.03 per hour – \$119.70 Self Employment Tax

**Doula Fee – \$1,000**

Less Expenses - (-\$179)

Remainder applied toward hours of work (36) - \$821

Approximately \$22.81 per hour – \$133.00 Self Employment Tax

Again, this is based on my time and expenses. Of course, over the duration of my time with a client, I can spend more or less one on one time. This is all approximations.

In the grand scheme of things, you're paying for an invaluable service during your pregnancy, labor, and birth. The difference a doula can make during this time is often priceless. The least that can be done is pay her asking fee.

Do you think that an OB or midwife would lower his/her costs if a mom told him/her that the fees just are not in their family's budget? Doulas are a valuable asset to a mom's birth team. Our time is also valuable – just ask our kids (and the electric company who won't waive our monthly bill because it doesn't fit into our budgets!)!