

In serving a pregnant mother, a doula **DOES** the following:

- ▶ provides emotional, physical and informational support throughout pregnancy, labor and delivery and early postpartum time
- ▶ offers help and advise for comfort measures for labor and delivery such as breathing, relaxation, movement and positioning
- ▶ provides continuous emotional reassurance and comfort during labor and delivery
- ▶ provides support and suggestions for the mother's partner during labor and delivery (i.e. her husband, mother, friend, etc.)
- ▶ explains and discusses practices, procedures and options, including assisting her and her partner in acquiring the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about care
- ▶ advocates for the mother's wishes as expressed in a birth plan or in prenatal conversations and intrapartum discussions by encouraging her to ask questions of her caregiver and to express her preferences and concerns
- ▶ available for extraneous needs as they arise, for example taking pictures or videos, food preparation, mediation with other family members, etc.
- ▶ helps the mother incorporate changes in plans if and when the need arises
- ▶ enhances the communication between mother, partner and caregiver through support, information, and mediation or negotiation
- ▶ foster parental bonding with baby
- ▶ supports and advises mother with initial breastfeeding (if desired)
- ▶ respects the privacy of all individuals involved in pregnancy and birth and holding in confidence all information obtained in the course of service
- ▶ treat families and their careproviders with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith

A doula **DOES NOT** do the following:

- ▶ perform clinical or medical tasks such as taking blood pressure or temperature, fetal heart tone checks, vaginal examinations or postpartum care
- ▶ give medical advice or diagnose medical conditions
- ▶ prescribe treatments for any medical conditions
- ▶ offer second opinions
- ▶ speak for or make decisions on behalf of the mother and/or her partner
- ▶ project the doula's own values and goals onto the laboring woman and her family

A note about epidurals and other pain medications:

The doula's goal is to help the woman have a safe and satisfying childbirth **as the woman defines it**. When a doula is present, some women feel less need for pain medications, or may postpone them until later in labor; however, many women choose or need pharmacological pain relief. It is **NOT** the role of the doula to discourage the mother from her choices. The doula helps her become informed about various options, including the risks, benefits, and accompanying precautions or interventions for safety. Doula can help *maximize* the benefits of pain medications while *minimizing* their undesirable side effects. The continuous comfort and reassurance offered by the doula are beneficial regardless of the use of pain medications.

Excerpts from the above information were taken from the Position Paper: The Doula's Contribution to Modern Maternity Care and the Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics for DONA International. For more information about doulas contact DONA by mail at P.O. Box 626, Jasper, IN 47547; (888) 788-DONA; emails to doula@DONA.org; or visit www.dona.org.