



Scope of Practice

Postpartum Doula trained under Doula Canada:

1. SERVICES PROVIDED

A Postpartum Doula provides non-medical, physical and emotional support as well as informational assistance up to a year following childbirth. Below are some guidelines followed by many Postpartum Doulas; however, services vary. A Postpartum Doula is encouraged to work with the family to find out what their needs are and what ways the Doula can best provide physical, emotional and informational support and ensure the family is well supported.

Postpartum doulas generally offer:

Physical Support

Helps mother learn to care for her postpartum baby and informs of warning signs to look for

Offers suggestions for postpartum comfort measures that will help expedite recovery, especially for cesarean care

Makes sure mother gets enough nourishment, fluids and rest

Helps the mother avoid certain postpartum conditions, such as exhaustion or engorgement

Emotional Support

Listens to the birth story

Supports the entire family through the transition into life with new baby

Validates the emotional challenges each family member may experience during postpartum, offering encouragement and reassurance as required

Informational Support

Guides family in infant care techniques such as bathing, umbilical care and circumcision options

Gives information on infant development guidelines

Helps parents learn about options surrounding feeding their baby

Informs parents on children's illnesses and injury prevention and offers community resources when things go beyond the scope of a Postpartum Doula

Assists families in bonding with their baby



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Practical Support

Prepares simple meals and snacks for the family

Cares for baby while parents eat, shower, or rest

Handles phone calls and answers the door

May do errands or help care for older siblings

May do laundry or light house cleaning

May offer overnight support in order to provide family with extra sleep

2. LIMITS TO PRACTICE

A Postpartum Doula does not perform postpartum clinical care, medical tasks, diagnose or treat any medical conditions. She does not do heavy housekeeping (mopping, scrubbing) or yard work and she does not focus on the household chores over focusing on the people in the house.

Where possible, all informational support rendered will be supported with evidence-based research and qualified resources. She will not insist that parents care for their infant in a particular manner. Rather she will provide information on benefits, risks and alternatives rather than their personal advice on all matters. She will have a database of community professionals that can be used as resources when the new family needs assistance making definitive choices. The Postpartum Doula must also advise her client to inform her primary caregiver prior to using any alternative therapies.

Where the Postpartum Doula has additional training in areas outside of the doula's scope of practice, she should refer to that profession and their scope of practice, and determine if it is appropriate to combine the roles. In any event, she is to clearly inform her clients of such training, the limits of her ability to offer knowledge and/or practice in this area, and that any additional services she offers is separate from her training as a doula. She is also encouraged to clearly define this situation to any healthcare provider she comes in contact with in order to avoid confusion regarding the Postpartum Doula's role and scope of practice.



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Definitions:

Advice: An opinion recommended or offered, as worthy to be followed; counsel.

Counsel: To advise or recommend, as an act or course. Advice given especially as a result of consultation. A policy or plan of action or behaviour

Evidence: To indicate clearly; exemplify or prove. Something that furnishes proof.

Opinion: A notion or conviction founded on probable evidence; belief stronger than impression, less strong than positive knowledge. A view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter.

Prescribe: To specify with authority. To direct, as in a remedy to be used by a patient; as, the doctor prescribed a medication. To write or to give medical directions; to indicate remedies.

Research: Scholarly or scientific investigation, inquiry. Careful or diligent search.

3. ADVOCACY/FACILITATION

The Postpartum Doula advocates for the benefit of a well balanced family primarily through informing and empowering all members.

This may include:

Listening to and supporting client's decisions regarding their own personal care and the care of their newborn, as well as explaining all other options when the first choices are not a viable option.

Encouraging the parents to speak for themselves and seek medical attention should the need arise.

Enhancing the communication between client and caregiver.

The Postpartum Doula does not make decisions for the client.

4. REFERRALS

For clients' needs beyond the scope of the Postpartum Doula's training or comfort, referrals are made to appropriate resources.