



Finding and Choosing the Right Doula for You

(for more on what a doula is, www.transitiontoparenthood.com/ttp/Doula/doulahome.htm)

Step #1: Find a list of available doulas in your area. Here's some good resources:

- Ask your childbirth educator, midwife, or doctor for referrals.
- For Seattle area doulas, contact PALS-Doulas: www.pals-doulas.org
- Doulas of North America (DONA). (888)788-DONA. www.dona.org DONA is the major North American doula organization, and on their website, you can get referrals to certified doulas in many cities.
- Websites with searchable databases of doulas: www.doulaworld.com, <http://doulanetwork.com/>
- There are a number of doulas who have personal websites up. Try a google search, and see what you come up with.

Step #2: From this list, and any additional information you can find out, pick 3 – 5 doulas to contact (with a backup list in case they're all booked up.)

Step #3: Call the doulas you've chosen and do a brief phone interview with them.

- First, find out if they are available for your due date. Also ask if they attend births at your planned birth place.
- Tell them you're doing an initial phone interview of 3 doulas, to get a sense of who might be a good match for you and your needs.
- Find out a little more about their experience, the skills and attitudes they bring to a birth. Find out about fees and other practical details.
- Most importantly, in this phone call, you're checking out "the vibes". Is this someone you think you could be comfortable with? If so, set up an in-person interview.

Step #4: Meet with one or more doulas in person.

- Find out more about them, tell them more about you and your birth plan.
- See if you have compatible philosophies, and if you think the style of support they offer would be helpful to you.
- If the interaction doesn't feel right to you, then let them know that, and try interviewing other doulas! Although training and experience and fee structure are all important factors in the selection, *the most important* factor is: do you and your partner feel comfortable with this person. Would you feel comfortable having her at your birth, and do you think she would be a good support for you? All of us have different personalities and styles, and sometimes the chemistry just doesn't feel right. Trust this instinct and move on.

Step #5: Hire a doula and start working together on the details of your birth plan.

- Once you have found "the right doula", start making arrangements with her for your birth.
- If you need a few days to decide, tell them this, but do make your decision soon, otherwise your doula may have to pass up prospective clients while

- waiting for your decision, or may take another client if she hasn't heard back from you.
- Most doulas will ask for a deposit before going on-call. This is because when we commit to a birth, it's a major commitment: it means not taking other clients for that time period, it means not going out of town, or making social plans that can't be re-scheduled, and it means taking a cell phone everywhere we go and always having child care plans for our kids. We have chosen to work as doulas knowing the level of this commitment, but it is also important to us that our clients honor that: if at some point you decide not to use a doula as planned, it is very important to call and let them know that so they can make other commitments.

For more information on pregnancy:

See our books: *Pregnancy, Childbirth & the Newborn* or *The Simple Guide to Having a Baby*.
Take a childbirth preparation class at Great Starts, or in your local community.

For parenting tips, information for families, or to talk to someone about parenting:

In Washington State: Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

Outside of WA: contact your local Circle of Parents agency at www.circleofparents.org