

*North Carolina Women's Hospital*  
**UNC BirthPartners Volunteer Doula Program**

“Doo-lah”

**What is a Doula?**

A doula is specially trained to help women during labor by providing extra emotional and physical support.

**How does a Doula help?**

There are many benefits to having a doula with you during labor. In addition to providing you with extra support, the doula is able to provide information to your other support people so that they know how to best help you. Recent research studies indicate that a woman who has a doula with her during labor is likely to:

- Have a shorter labor
- Have a vaginal delivery
- Deliver without forceps
- Have more positive feelings towards her baby
- Have more positive memories of the birth
- Have less postpartum depression

**What if I already have a partner or friend or family member coming for my labor?**

Often your partner or friends or family members feel confused and helpless as they watch the labor. The doula can help them feel confident that they are assisting you in safe ways.

**What is UNC BirthPartners?**

UNC BirthPartners is a group of doulas who are professionally trained according to national standards. These doulas are screened to make sure they are prepared to work in our volunteer program. Because they are volunteers, they may not always be available but we try to have a volunteer with us every day. When a BirthPartner doula is available, they are assigned to a mother who is in greatest need. Particularly those mothers who do not have other support persons or have special health risks.

**What is the difference between a private Doula and a UNC BirthPartner Doula?**

Private doulas are hired to be ready to come to the hospital when you do. The only way to be certain you will have your own doula is to hire a private doula to work only with you. A private doula will meet with you before the birth and she will come to the hospital to be with you during your stay in labor and delivery. She will also visit you after your baby's birth.

Volunteers staff the UNC BirthPartners program. When a BirthPartner doula is available, the staff assigns her to mothers who are in greatest need such as those who do not have other support persons or have special risks. Because BirthPartners is a volunteer program, it is possible that no volunteer will be available at the time you are in labor.

### **How do I sign up to have a UNC BirthPartner Doula?**

To sign up for a BirthPartner doula, let your doctor, midwife, or nurse know of your interest during one of your prenatal visits. Your interest in having a BirthPartner doula will be noted on your prenatal record. Also, when you come to the hospital in labor tell your nurse of your interest as soon as you can. If you want more information about UNC BirthPartners, Teresa Howard, Program Manager of UNC BirthPartners at 919-843-1907 or at [doula@unch.unc.edu](mailto:doula@unch.unc.edu).

### **What does it cost to have a Doula?**

- UNC BirthPartners doulas are free. While donations are not required or expected, they are greatly appreciated. Donations are used to support the continuity of the volunteer doula program. If you choose to make a tax-deductible donation, please send it to: The Medical Foundation of North Carolina, 880 Airport Road, Chapel Hill, NC, 27514. Make sure to write on the memo line of your check that it is a contribution for UNC BirthPartners.
- Private doulas charge a fee for their services. The fee varies by doula.

### **How do I find a private Doula?**

Here are some suggestions if you want to find a private doula or want to learn more about doulas in general.

- Doulas of North America – [www.dona.org](http://www.dona.org) or 888-788-3662
- International Childbirth Education Association – [www.icea.org](http://www.icea.org) or 952-854-8660
- toLabor – <http://www.tolabor.com> or 804-320-0607
- Ask a childbirth educator or massage therapist for suggestions

For information on local private doulas, feel free to contact Teresa Howard at [birthpartners@gmail.com](mailto:birthpartners@gmail.com).