Sacopee Midwives
Certified Professional Midwives serving
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Do I need a doula for my planned home birth?

This is a very common question, and the answer, like many “answers” from your midwives, is not a simple yes or no. Below is some information that is intended to help you determine if a doula is right for you.

What is a doula?

The word "doula" comes from the ancient Greek meaning "a woman who serves" and is now used to refer to trained professionals who provide physical and emotional support to clients before, during and after childbirth. They do not provide any medical or clinical care, but act more as an informational resource and continuity of care.

“Countless scientific trials examining doula care demonstrate remarkably improved physical and psychological outcomes for both pregnant, birthing, and postpartum people and their baby. Doulas have a positive impact on the well-being of the entire family.” - Doulas of North America

A doula is essential for a planned hospital birth for many reasons. A major reason is that you may or may not have met or have a relationship with the doctor/nurse- midwife who is on-call the day or days you are in labor, and the nurses may not have all the time you would like them to give. A doula is there to be someone who knows what you want, someone that you already have a connection with, and someone to provide continuous labor support.

At home, these things are often covered by your midwives—we already know you well and have made a connection, we know what you want from your birth and we also provide labor support. In most cases, doulas are not necessary at home the way they are in the hospital, especially for people who have birthed before.

However, especially first time birthers, a doula can be a great addition to your birth team. It’s not always easy to know if your birth will benefit from a doula. Read on to get an understanding of what we do, and trust your feelings as you consider what kind of support you would benefit from during your birth.

Your midwives’ philosophy on labor support and their role at your birth:

As your midwives, we believe it can be a very special time for your relationship, if you are partnered, to do a lot of the early labor time together, on your own. This bonding time can be a well of connection that you draw from in the early weeks of parenting. Also, we recognize that early labor is most susceptible to that “watched pot” feeling, and the presence of someone else at home with you can slow or inhibit your labor.

The typical time that we arrive for your labor and birth is when your labor becomes active, or when you let us know that you are ready for more support—whichever comes first. We are often in touch by phone multiple times, making suggestions, asking questions, before we collectively decide it is time for us to come.

Our role at your birth is multi-faceted. It is informational, emotional, and physical support. It may sometimes be medical support. It is always being watchful, mindful and protective of normal birth. This includes monitoring you and your baby’s health, your labor progress and your state of mind. It includes verbal and physical support, and presence.

We value the fact that we have more than one midwife in our practice that you have gotten to know in your prenatal care, so that we can switch off as needed for naps or food breaks. As your midwives, it is very important that we be rested and alert at all times, but especially during the actual time of birth and in the immediate hours postpartum. We use each other for respite so that both midwives are able to provide that important midwifery and/or medical care when your baby first arrives.

Doulas philosophy on labor support and their role at your birth:

Every doula is different, and if you are interested in hiring one for your birth, we encourage you to interview more than one to find the right fit. Doulas are there to provide informational, emotional and physical support for your labor. They are not medical providers, and while they have knowledge and experience of labor and birth, they will not be monitoring your physical health or provide medical care to your or your baby.

Doulas can provide amazingly long hours of continuous support and will support a couple in their home as soon as labor has established itself. For people planning a hospital birth, doulas often go to the home first and help the family decide when it’s time to go. For people planning home births, a doula may or may not arrive first to provide labor support before the arrival of the midwives. A doula can focus solely on comfort measures and labor support. Many doulas also offer postpartum support services which can be very helpful in those first few weeks.

If you feel a doula would be right for your birth team, feel free to ask us for recommendations or check out the Birth Roots resource guide.