



Meetings Summary

PCORI Doula Convenings: Supporting Doula Care Through Research

Fall 2022

Throughout October and November, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) engaged with several doulas and doula organizations to discuss **perceptions of doula care, current barriers to providing doula care and the needs of the doula community, and future opportunities for research and capacity building** to support doula engagement and partnership in comparative clinical effectiveness research.

The participants represented a diverse range of doula organizations from ten states and served clients from underserved areas or historically excluded populations. Their organizations offer a range of services including pre- and post-natal care, bereavement support, lactation consulting, and mental health support, as well as specialists in yoga, reiki, and herbal treatments. Some also referred their clients to additional resources in their community to address social determinants of health, such as housing and food insecurity.

Participants discussed **training requirements for becoming a certified doula**. There was consensus around need for a basic doula training program that is widely accessible and supplemented with continuing education throughout the course of a doula's journey. Many discussed the need to create programs that ensure doula work is sustainable and emphasizes care for oneself/one's family while providing continuity of care for their clients.

Topics Suggested by Participants for Inclusion in Future Doula Training Programs

- Basic biological and physiological processes for childbirth
- Stages of labor, birth process, post-partum period
- Nutrition
- Comfort measures
- Mental health
- Trauma-informed care
- Bereavement support for infant loss
- Implicit bias within health systems
- Healthy boundaries; teaching patients to be their own advocates for care



Current Barriers to Providing Doula Care

Participants discussed the biggest needs and/or barriers to offering doula services in their communities. Participants mentioned funding for the administrative costs of running a doula program (or costs of doula care) and reimbursement for doula services for clients who cannot pay out of pocket were the biggest barriers.

They described the difficulty of working solely as a full-time doula because the compensation does not match the demands of the work; most said they supplemented their incomes with other employment.

Participants discussed their various forms of payment, which ranged from grants, insurance payments, or sliding scale fees, and suggested that doula care be included in health insurance coverage for pregnancy care services.

Several noted that payment for doulas should include a package, or bundle, of services.

Future Opportunities & Next Steps

The convening concluded with a discussion about experiences participating in research and important topics for research related to doula care. Most participants noted they had been involved previously in various forms of research. Participants cited experiencing a tendency to use doulas for research without appropriately compensating them for their expertise or fully integrating their perspective and ideas into studies being developed. Participants suggested trainings for doulas and doula organizations on how to collect data or apply for funding. They suggested research that demonstrates:

- What doulas do in relation to other members of the maternal care team
- Links between doula care, community health work, and parent education

For information on PCORI Funding Announcements visit: <https://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities>

For questions about PCORI's Maternal Mortality and Morbidity work or funding write to:

MMMPCORI@pcori.org

Doula Integration into Maternal Care Teams Varies Greatly

Several doulas spoke to the need to create a united birthing team model inclusive of midwives, nurses, physicians, and doulas, with each clinician understanding and appreciating colleagues' respective roles in the birth process and assurance of good birth outcomes.