

# ALAMEDA ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH DOULA BENEFIT OVERVIEW – FOR CLINICIANS (NON-DOULAS)



## Introduction

Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance) created this Doula Benefit Overview to help provide key information and resources for you and your staff when working with doulas.

The objectives of this overview are to:

1. Review the role of doulas and the doula benefit
2. Review the benefits of doula services
3. Review initiating doula services

We aim to ensure that your relationship with us and other providers works well for you, your staff, and Alliance members. More information is available in your Alliance contract, the Alliance Provider Manual, and on our website at [www.alamedaalliance.org](http://www.alamedaalliance.org).

The information in this overview is subject to change. For clarification, questions, or comments about your role as an Alliance provider, please call the Alliance Provider Services Department at **1.510.747.4510**.

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## Section 1. The Role of Doulas and the Doula Benefit

The Alliance offers doula services as a covered benefit for Medi-Cal and Group Care members.

Doulas are birth workers who provide health education, advocacy, and physical, emotional, and non-medical support for pregnant and postpartum people before, during, and after childbirth, including support during miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion.

Doula services are aimed at preventing perinatal complications and improving health outcomes for birthing parents and infants. Doulas are not licensed, and they do not require supervision.

Additional support offered by doulas includes:

- Childbirth education
- Creating a birth plan
- Help with making decisions about care
- Link to community-based resources
- Breastfeeding (also known as chestfeeding) education and support

### Covered Doulas Services

In 2023, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) issued a statewide standing recommendation for doula services. The recommendation states that all Medi-Cal members who are pregnant or have been pregnant within the past year would benefit from doula services.

The standing recommendation authorizes the following doula services:

- One (1) initial visit
- Up to eight (8) additional visits that can be provided in any combination of prenatal and postpartum visits
- Support during labor and delivery (including labor and delivery resulting in stillbirth), abortion, or miscarriage
- Up to two (2) extended three (3)-hour postpartum visits after the end of a pregnancy

### Additional Doula Services

Alliance members may receive up to (9) nine additional postpartum visits with a written recommendation from a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts\* acting within their scope of practice. Doulas keep the recommendation in the member's medical record.

\*DHCS defines a "licensed provider" as a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts, including nurse midwives, nurse practitioners, licensed midwives, and behavioral health providers, acting within their scope of practice under state law. The recommending licensed provider does not need to be enrolled in Medi-Cal or be a network provider within the beneficiary's managed care plan.

Providers can find the **Recommendation for Additional Doula Services Form** on our website at [www.alamedaalliance.org/providers/provider-forms](http://www.alamedaalliance.org/providers/provider-forms).

## Telehealth and In-Person Visits

Doula services can be provided virtually (telehealth) or in-person with locations in any setting including, but not limited to, homes, office visits, hospitals, or alternative birth centers. Doula services can only be provided during pregnancy; labor and delivery, including stillbirth; miscarriage; abortion; and within one (1) year of the end of a member's pregnancy.

Doulas can provide assistive or supportive services in the home during a prenatal or postpartum visit (i.e., a doula may help provide breathing technique options to a birthing person during labor and delivery, or a doula may help the postpartum person fold laundry while providing emotional support and offering advice on infant care). The visit must be face-to-face, and the assistive or supportive service must be incidental (accompanying) to doula services provided during the prenatal or postpartum visit.

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## Section 2. The Benefits of Doula Services

Individuals who work with a doula during the perinatal period:

- Have better birth outcomes
- Are four (4) times less likely to have a low-birth-weight baby
- Are two (2) times less likely to experience a birth complication
- Are significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding<sup>1</sup>
- Have a lower chance of developing postpartum depression or postpartum anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

Doulas can be an effective way to address maternal health disparities, especially for women who are at *higher risk* for maternal mortality and morbidity.

Doulas play a key role in the perinatal provider team.

They can:

- Act as an advocate for the perinatal individual and their family
- Bridge any gap between the healthcare team and the member
- Encourage members to go to their prenatal and postpartum visits, and their baby's well child visits
- Reinforce education offered at perinatal visits or perinatal classes
- Encourage members to see their healthcare team when medical issues or concerns arise
- Provide culturally appropriate emotional support during labor and delivery

## Section 3. Initiating Doula Services

Providers or members may initiate doula services by searching for and contacting a doula by using the online Alliance Provider Directory at [www.alamedaalliance.org/help/find-a-doctor](http://www.alamedaalliance.org/help/find-a-doctor).

Providers and members may contact doulas directly using the following steps in the online Alliance Provider Directory:

- Choose **location preference**
- Choose Alliance Plan: **Medi-Cal or Group Care**
- Choose Specialty: **Doula**

Doula services *do not* require prior authorizations. The DHCS standing recommendation authorizes the initial visit, eight (8) prenatal and postpartum visits in any combination, and support during labor and delivery.

Additional doula services require a recommendation from a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts acting within their scope of practice.

## We Are Here to Help You

We hope that you have found the information and resources in this overview to be useful and helpful. Your partnership with the Alliance is vital to our relationship. We welcome and encourage comments and suggestions about this overview or any other aspect of your relationship with the Alliance. Together, we are creating a healthier community for all.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Alliance Provider Services Department  
Monday – Friday, 7:30 am – 5 pm  
Phone Number: **1.510.747.4510**  
Email: [providerservices@alamedaalliance.org](mailto:providerservices@alamedaalliance.org)

### Sources

1. Gruber KJ, Cupito SH, Dobson CF. Impact of doulas on healthy birth outcomes. J Perinat Educ. 2013 Winter;22(1):49-58. doi: 10.1891/1058-1243.22.1.49. PMID: 24381478; PMCID: PMC3647727.
2. Falconi AM, Bromfield SG, Tang T, Malloy D, Blanco D, Disciglio RS, Chi RW. Doula care across the maternity care continuum and impact on maternal health: Evaluation of doula programs across three states using propensity score matching. EClinicalMedicine. 2022 Jul 1;50:101531. doi: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2022.101531. PMID: 35812994; PMCID: PMC9257331.