

Choosing a Doula

How can you pick the right doula? Where do you even start? You might be nervous about interviewing doulas. Or unsure what steps to take first.

Start with identifying what you want from your doula. Reassurance? Physical support and comfort during labor? Specialized expertise in attending twin births or VBAC (vaginal birth after cesarean)? Knowing what you want is the first step to making sure you get it! Likewise, a good doula finds out what you want and works toward that, instead of offering a "one size fits all" service.

Keep in mind that the doula who is right for you may not be the one who has attended the most births, but could be the one who can offer the support you need and with whom you and your support team "click" the best.

Consider the following when you're speaking to a doula you're thinking about hiring:

- How much time does the doula spend doing the talking during your conversation? How much time do they spend listening to you? A good doula listens a lot!
- How much does the doula include your partner in their questions and discussions?
- Do you feel able to speak your mind with the doula or are you worried about what they will think?
- Do you feel this is someone you would enjoy getting to know and appreciate having present at your birth or supporting you during the postpartum period?
- What kind of formal training or work experience have they had as a doula? Some doulas have had basic training with a weekend workshop, while others have done months of extensive study, and still others have been trained "on the job" with no formal schooling; is there a particular training background that is important to you? Check the website of your doula's training organization to find out more about their formal qualifications. You can find out about Childbirth International training programs at www.childbirthinternational.com.

If there is something specific you are looking for, or a particular concern you have, ask them how they have supported other parents in your situation. In the end, listen to your instincts!

Questions to ask a Doula

- Tell me about one of your favorite births you've attended as a doula; what did you enjoy?
- Tell me about one of your most challenging births as a doula; what was hard?
- Have you ever worked with a medical caregiver who wasn't happy working with a doula? How did you handle it?
- What kinds of things do you find that partners feel are helpful during a birth?
- What is your cancellation policy?
- What is your policy in the event I have a cesarean?
- Do you have a back-up in case you are unable to attend my birth? Will we be able to meet them before the birth?
- What other services do you offer (such as breastfeeding support, postpartum services, childbirth classes)?
- Can we speak to other parents whose births you have attended?