



The Doula Guide
TO HIRING A DOULA

SILICON VALLEY DOULAS

TIPS AND TOOLS FOR FINDING THE PERFECT DOULA FOR YOU

Welcome!

Welcome to the Doula Guide to Hiring A Doula!

If you're reading this, it's probably because you've scheduled a consultation with the Silicon Valley Doulas team and we are looking forward to meeting you!

Why would our doula team create a guide to help people hire a doula? One of our goals in supporting families during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum is to give them the tools to feel confident about the choices they are making - and in that spirit, we want you to have the tools to make a confident, informed decision about hiring a doula. In this guide, you'll get a sneak peek at the tips and tools we've discovered over the years to help families connect with the right doula for them.

If I'm being honest, I hope you'll read through this guide, meet our team, and if we feel like a match, we'll get to work together! But, if we don't feel like a match, it's still super important to us that you connect with a doula that is right for you.

Virtual Hugs,
Czarina



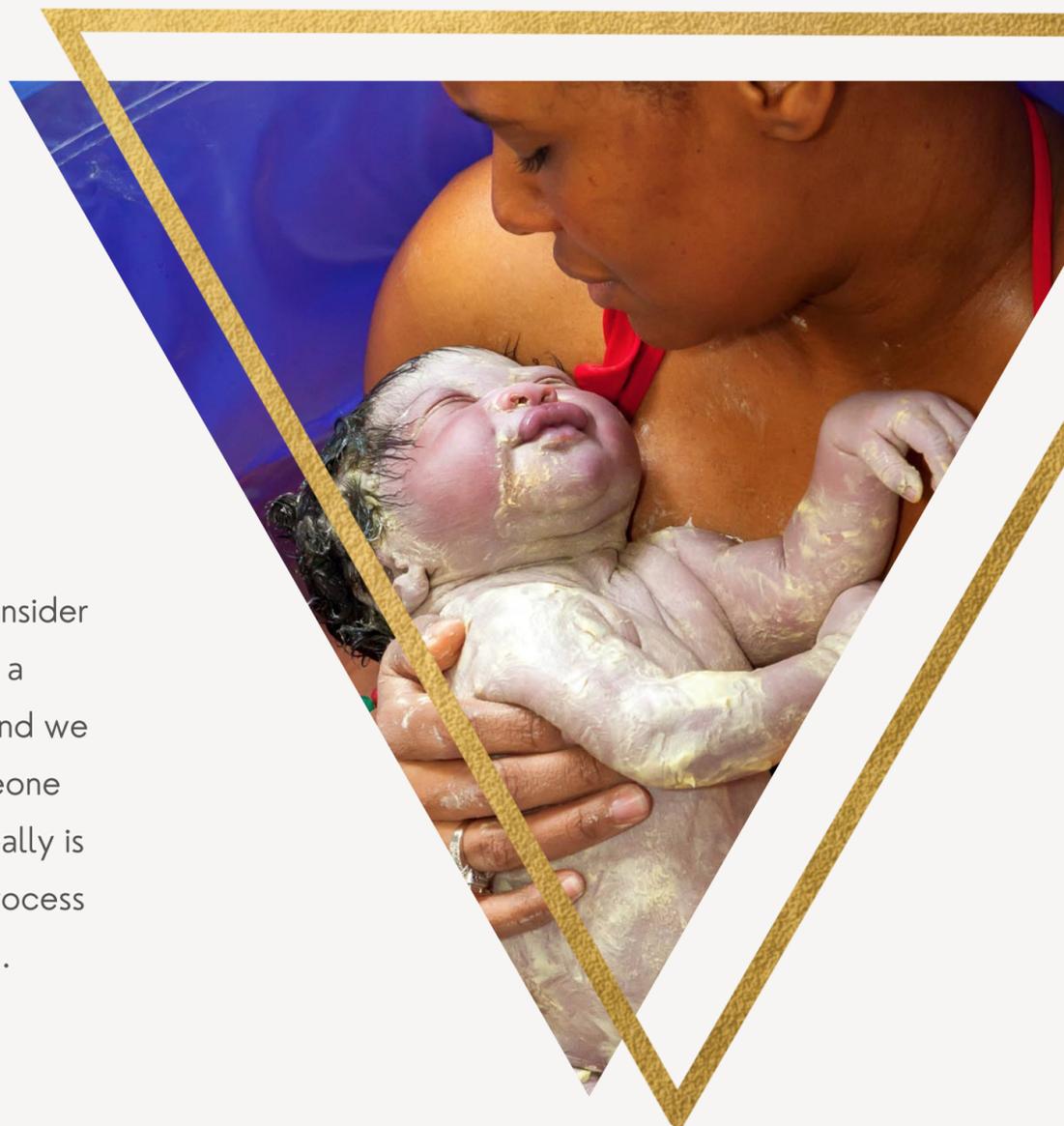


What is a Doula?

I can assume you probably already know about the benefits of doula care, like improved outcomes in birth, lower rates of intervention, decreased need for pain management drugs, and more people describing their birth as a positive experience. You probably also know that doulas provide a full spectrum of care before, during, and after birth. If you're new to learning about doulas, in a nutshell, we are educators, coaches, advocates, and caregivers. We support people to have a positive experience as they move through the journey to parenthood without judgment, with less fear, and with realistic expectations.

When to Hire

So how does one hire a doula? There are many factors to consider when searching for a doula, interviewing doulas, and making a decision. As doulas, we know what people are looking for and we know what really matters most when choosing to invite someone into your pregnancy, birth, and postpartum experience. It really is a big decision, and this guide will help to break down the process so you don't get overwhelmed and stuck in analysis paralysis.





When to Hire

If you are looking for a birth doula, as long as you're pregnant, it's not too late to hire a doula! Doulas know how to provide stellar support even to people they've just met (and the research backs that up!)

That being said, there is a benefit to hiring a doula earlier in your pregnancy to have the opportunity to develop a strong working relationship and receive prenatal preparation and coaching so you know what to expect on the big day.

Additionally, some doulas may structure their practice in such a way that you would want to start working with them during your second or third trimester to ensure that you have enough time to take advantage of the classes and services they offer.

HOW TO FIND YOUR DOULAS

1

WORD OF MOUTH

Recommendations from people you know are great because you can get a first hand account of what it was like to work with that doula. On the flip side, remember that personal referrals are personal. What makes my favorite restaurant my favorite is almost certainly not what makes your favorite restaurant your favorite. Ask your friends, family, and coworkers if they used a doula during their birth and find out what they thought of their experience. There's no need to ask your friends to make an introduction, but when you reach out, do be sure to let the doula know who referred you - it gives us little warm fuzzies in our heart to think about our previous clients and to know they trust us to support their loved ones.

2

YELP

Now, if you're reading this Doula Guide from Silicon Valley Doulas, I assume that you live somewhere in the SF Bay Area. And around here, people are very active on Yelp. And they yelp about their experiences with doulas as well. I actually love yelp reviews for everything because people get to be super honest about their experiences, and with doula reviews, I just love that people share a bit of their birth stories too - reading positive birth stories is so great during pregnancy to help you adopt a positive mindset towards birth. As with all critics and reviews, remember that even Michelin 3-Star restaurants get bad reviews from people.

3

SOCIAL MEDIA

Like personal referrals from friends and family, reaching out to the internet is a grab bag for referrals. The great thing about social media, is that with the cloak of general anonymity some people get honest real fast and are willing to tell you all about their experiences, good or bad.

4

SEARCH ENGINES

Google is a great place to look! Be sure to scroll down because there are far more practices than what you'll find on the front page. You may also look for local directories or local birth networks in your area.

How to Pay for Doula Services

Doulas work independent of the hospital and must be hired by the pregnant person (in most cases) and their fees are often paid out of pocket by the client. The rates for doula care vary wildly based on where you live and often the doula's level of experience or years in practice. For some families, hiring a doula is as simple as signing on the dotted line. For some the costs may be prohibitive and people may need to explore solutions to make paying for doula care a reality.

Most doulas offer some type of payment plan. Clients can typically break up payments into smaller, more manageable chunks. In this situation, doulas typically request a portion of their fee as a non-refundable retainer that guarantees their availability for your due date, and then require the balance be paid before the birth, towards the end of the pregnancy.

Some families have access to Health Savings Accounts or Flex Spending Accounts (HSA/FSA) and are pleased to know that doula care is often covered as an allowable expense. Our team has worked with many families that utilized their HSA/FSA by paying directly or submitting an invoice for reimbursement.

Some companies cover the cost of doula care because they know that employees that have support have better experiences, recover better and sooner, and are able to have a smoother transition back to work after birth. Its worth reaching out to your HR department to find out what kinds of benefits your company offers to new and expecting parents.

Family and friends often want to shower the new parents with offers of support and don't always know the best way to go about it. Modern baby showers leave parents with heaps of diapers, onesies, and receiving blankets, but sometimes parents really don't need those things. Thats where registries come in. In addition to registering for the exact items you need so that you don't end up with lots of unwanted clutter, you can also use sites like Babylist to register for doula care as well. And of course GoFundMe and similar sites are a good solution for asking friends and family to help cover the cost of doula care.

BREAKING IT DOWN

WHAT DOULAS OFFER

The diversity of doula practices and their packages is such that this guide will only scratch the surface of the wide variety of services that doula care can encompass.

For the intent of this guide, we'll discuss two types of doula support:

Birth Support

The typical birth doula package is all inclusive with one fee, no matter how long or short your labor may be, and includes one or more one-on-one sessions to help you prepare for labor and birth. Sessions are typically focused on topics including birth preferences, expectations, and answering all the questions swimming around your mind as birth approaches. Some doulas may include additional classes or support groups for their clients. Your doula package should include the option to call, text, or email with questions or concerns anytime during pregnancy and in the first weeks or few months following birth. One of the benefits of doula care is having someone to turn to with questions to help filter out the noise of Dr. Google. Doulas may provide support in-person, or virtually, or provide a combination of virtual and in-person services.



Postpartum Support

After the baby is born, the birthing person needs support to help assist and guide parents through physical and emotional aspects of healing and recovery, learning about the behavior and development of the new baby and how to engage together, and learning about how to care for this new tiny human being.

Postpartum doulas come alongside parents and they provide this care and support. Postpartum doulas may join the family during the daytime or in the evening, or overnight, helping tired parents to get sleep. Postpartum doulas may charge by the hour or per session. Some postpartum doulas work with a family for a few sessions here and there over the first few weeks after the baby is born, or they might work with a family several times a week for the first few months after the baby is born.

Our job as postpartum doulas is to work ourselves out of a job. We want to instill confidence in our clients so they start out their journey as parents on the right foot, and when you don't need us there anymore, we know we did our jobs.



MEETING DOULAS

Ok! So now you've found doulas, you understand a bit more about what you're looking for, and you're ready to start meeting people. Now what? It's time to reach out! Start with the top five doula practices that you feel drawn to and reach out to schedule a consultation.

A note on scheduling: Doulas have crazy schedules. Don't be deterred if a doula has to reschedule due to being at a birth - it happens and it's out of our control!

When you meet the doulas, you may be tempted to focus on your checklist of questions about philosophy, training and certification, logistics, and other general questions. While this information is helpful and good to know, it's just as important to listen for the nuances in the conversation. Is it easy to talk together? Do you like the sound of the doula's voice? Does their presence put you at ease? Are they fun or funny? Are they calming and reassuring?

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Hopefully, you found a love match with one of the first five doulas you met. If not, meet with a few more. But stop there. At a certain point, meeting more doulas won't be helpful, and will lead to decision fatigue.

Your decision should hopefully be based on the chemistry you had with the doulas you met. Try not to get bogged down in how many births your doula has attended or about their training and certifications. The original research on doulas showed that it was just the simple presence of an untrained person providing continuous care during labor improved birth outcomes for those people. If you really really like a brand new doula, your connection is more important than how many births that doula has been to.





Hiring Your Doula

Booking your doula

Every doula does this differently. Some Doulas use an online booking system and some prefer the reliability of good old pen and paper.

At Silicon Valley Doulas we use a secure online booking system that allows our clients to view and sign their contract and pay online.

It's important that you sign a contract with your potential Doula.

It's a sure sign of professionalism when your doula has a proper contract that protects both parties in the working relationship.

What to expect after booking your doula

Each doula practice will have a different process for working together.

Here some important things you should expect:

Communication guidelines - how will you communicate with your doula team during pregnancy? What are the protocols for contacting the doulas when labor begins? Or during an induction?

Scheduling - In our practice we encourage clients to schedule their prenatal session right away to make sure they reserve a time on our calendar that works for them

Resources - You can probably anticipate that your doula will send over recommendations for websites to visit, books to read, classes to take, and local provider recommendations for complementary services like massage, therapy and support groups, photography, etc

Frequently Answered Questions

If you received this guide after booking a consultation with the Silicon Valley Doula team, then we are looking forward to meeting you!

Here are the answers to some questions we are frequently asked:

Birth Support

We currently offer two kinds of Birth Doula Services - Virtual Doula Support and In-Person Doula Support.

We can discuss more in-depth the differences and similarities of those offerings during our consult. We also offer Birth Consulting!

Regardless of what kind of support you are looking for, there are many things that are the same.

* We can help you with positions. We know so many ways to help you move and help your baby move.

* We can help you make decisions. We cannot make decisions for you, but we can help you to better understand the context of the decisions being presented and help you understand some of the medical language.

* We have lots of experience. Between us, we have over two decades of experience with all kinds of births. We have received training from leading organizations in the field of childbirth education and birth and postpartum support and provide a plethora of tools to YOUR birth.

* We don't judge if the time comes when you might want (or do) x, y, or z. We understand that birth is powerful and unique to all people and by its very nature is a rite of passage. Whatever tools are needed at the time to help you birth your baby are what you need; and we are here to support you, no matter what.

* We don't replace your birth support person, whether that is your spouse, friend, or member of your family. We add to the fabric of support for you. Most laboring people need more than one support person. Together, with layers of support, we will all make a team for you.

Postpartum Support

* We can help you with breastfeeding/chestfeeding. We know a lot about feeding babies and we can troubleshoot most common challenges that come up. And, we know the best lactation consultants in the area if we think you might need extra help. (We can also help to keep parents fed too!!)

* We can help you understand your baby and help bolster your confidence as parents. Our goal is to work ourselves out of a job. If you don't need us around, we'll miss you, and we'll be happy knowing that you're thriving and adjusting well to life with a newborn.

* We don't judge if the time comes when you might want (or do) x, y, or z. We understand that parenting is unique to all people and we believe deeply that parents are the experts of their babies. Whatever tools are needed at the time to help you and your baby are what you need; and we are here to support you, no matter what.

* We don't replace your your partner, spouse, friend, or members of your family. We add to the fabric of support for you. And we're here for the whole family. We support the people who support you.

* We know you might not know exactly what you need right now. Because we work as a team, we are able to offer flexibility to our families who might not know exactly what they need just yet, and because of our experience, we can also offer suggestions based on your family's unique situation.

Many parents also want to know how we are responding to COVID-19. We are professional germaphobes. For real. Even before the pandemic, we took the health and safety of our clients' families (and our own families!) very seriously. For the last three years of our practice, it's been our policy to have open communication about symptoms of illness for either the clients or our doulas, and we always postpone sessions as needed until all members of the household are feeling well. We are vaccinated, wear masks while working, and follow CDC guidelines to protect ourselves, our families, and the families and babies we work with.

THANK YOU!

Thanks for downloading and reading the Doula Guide to Hiring a Doula. We hope it was helpful for you as you explore your options for doula care.

We would love your feedback. Please drop us a line at svdoulas@gmail.com and follow us for more tips and tools on our social channels at [@siliconvalleydoulas](https://www.instagram.com/siliconvalleydoulas)

If you would like to learn more about our team you can visit our website at svdoulas.com and if you'd like to work together, I'm pretty sure that now you know the next steps. ;-)

