

# BirthWell Partners

## Community Doula Project



### ***BirthWell Partners***

is a not-for-profit community doula project whose mission is to improve the health of mothers & infants in Central Alabama

by offering free and reduced-cost childbirth education, breastfeeding assistance, and non-medical labor support provided by birth doulas.

## *The Health of a Community is Measured by the Health of its Children...*

*Alabama has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation. Too many children in Alabama are born too soon and too small. Too many live in a “first food desert” where breastfeeding is not well supported.*

Citing a growing body of evidence, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, along with the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine, have identified doulas as “one of the most effective tools to improve labor and delivery outcomes.” Research shows doula supported individuals are less likely to give birth to a low-birth weight or preterm baby, to have a surgical birth (c-section), or to suffer from postpartum depression.

Doulas and childbirth classes together empower pregnant people to participate in their own health care decisions, as well as foster communication between clients and care providers, provide referrals and resources, and encourage informed choices during pregnancy, birth, and parenting. As a result, birthgivers are more likely to have a positive birth experience, to initiate and continue breastfeeding, and to report greater confidence in parenting.

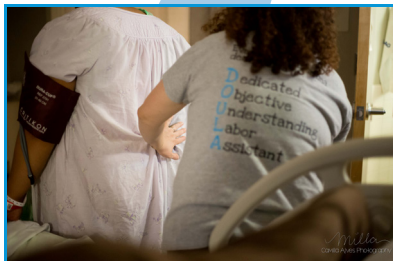
The potential impact of childbirth education and doula support are greatest for people at higher risk for poor infant health. However, according to the Listening to Mothers III Survey, *although vulnerable families are more likely to want these services, they are less likely to have access to them.*

BirthWell Partners exists to fill this gap, serving families that *stand to benefit the most* from these services. We train birth doulas, we provide free and reduced-cost doula services for families with financial need, and we teach childbirth education classes in the community.

*When we make doula services accessible  
--regardless of ability to pay--we give children in  
some of our most vulnerable communities a chance  
of better health and nutrition from the start of life.*

## **Doula Services:** *We Provide Doulas for Pregnant People Giving Birth in Birmingham, Anniston, and Tuscaloosa Area Hospitals*

Doulas do not deliver babies. While often confused with midwives, doulas strictly provide non-medical support. Research shows that the support doulas provide has a measurable, positive impact on maternal and infant health. Higher birth weights, fewer pre-term births, and fewer c-sections are just some of the benefits.



*“She helped me through the contractions, kept me lifted emotionally, helped show me how to breastfeed, helped my partner support me through labor.”*

Doulas support clients one-on-one during pregnancy, labor, birth, and the early postpartum period. During pregnancy, doulas help clients find the information they need to prepare for labor and parenting. During labor, doulas offer encouraging words, suggest position changes, provide massage or counter-pressure during contractions, and more. They also encourage early skin-to-skin contact, assist with breastfeeding, and help their clients learn to respond to their baby’s cues during the first hours and days after birth.

BirthWell Partners clients report greater satisfaction with their birth experience, are less likely to have a c-section, and over 90% initiate breastfeeding. This better start supports attachment and helps parents cope with the challenging early weeks and months of parenting. Improving early parent-infant interactions may provide long-lasting benefits to children’s emotional and physical development.

*Do you know a pregnant person who could benefit from our doula services?*

*Encourage them to contact us!*

**205-614-3297**

## Doula Training: *Increasing the Number and Diversity of Doulas Serving our Communities*

When we started our program in 2011, there were only a handful of doulas in the area, almost exclusively serving white, upper-middle class clients. Since that time, we have worked to raise awareness about the impact of doulas, and have increased the size and diversity of the doula community, so that more pregnant people who want a doula can access one.

*A doula is a trained labor support professional who provides physical, emotional and informational support for families during pregnancy, labor, birth and the early postpartum period.*

We also strive to make training accessible. About a third of trainees participate in a needs-based work-study program. They, and other volunteers, provide doula services for our clients. This is a win-win for doulas, clients and communities: clients give doulas valuable hands-on experience, while doulas give clients respectful, nurturing care.

We hold 2-3 workshops a year, training over 30 doulas annually. Our intensive 5-day doula training is packed with childbirth and breastfeeding information, hands-on skills, business training for doulas, and a perinatal health advocate component focused on health disparities. Our doula trainer is approved by DONA International and this workshop serves as a first-step towards certification with DONA.

\*DONA International is the oldest and most respected doula certifying organization in the world.

*“BirthWell Partners provided a comprehensive, hands on course that emphasized love, support and encouragement of every birth giver.”*



*Upcoming training dates and work-study info are on our website!*

## **Childbirth Classes: Providing Evidence-Based Information about Birth, Bonding, and Breastfeeding**

To make truly informed decisions, and to discover the benefits of doula support, families must have access to comprehensive, evidence-based childbirth classes. We partner with community organizations to teach childbirth classes, providing families with access to information about birth and breastfeeding despite transportation barriers.

Classes empower parents to make health care decisions for themselves and their children during the childbearing year. Small class size, with instructors trained in cultural competency, enable us to address the unique needs of under-resourced families. Topics covered include: maintaining a healthy pregnancy, warning signs of preterm labor, the physiological process of birth, risks and benefits of commonly utilized labor interventions, breastfeeding, safe sleep and newborn care.

*“This class taught me  
that I have a say!*

*I can move more  
during labor and push  
in different positions.*

*I can ask questions,  
say “stop” and  
create a birth plan.”*



*We offer classes through churches, service providers,  
and agencies to increase our reach.*

*If you are interested in hosting or referring  
clients to our classes, please contact us!*

[www.BirthWellPartners.org](http://www.BirthWellPartners.org)



# Doula

[Doo-luh]

**A person who is trained to provide informational, physical & emotional support to pregnant people before, during and after childbirth.**

## BirthWell Partners Community Doula Project

Executive Director of Program Operations

Dalia Abrams: 205-614-3297

Dalia@BirthWellPartners.org

Executive Director of Business Operations

Susan Petrus: 205-222-0343

Susan@BirthWellPartners.org

**[www.BirthWellPartners.org](http://www.BirthWellPartners.org)**