

Birth Empowerment Through Partnership:

Integrating Doula Care into California's Healthcare System

Moderator: Adrienne McIntyre

Panelists: Elena Rhoads-Baeza, April Ricotta, and Zakiyyah Smith

Thursday, November 19, 2026

Continuing Education Information

MCCPOP
Mid-Coastal California
Perinatal Outreach Program

- Attendees will be eligible for contact hours through the the Mid-Coastal California Perinatal Outreach Program (MCCPOP). MCCPOP is approved as a provider of continuing education by the California Board of Registered Nurses, Provider #3104. This course has been approved for **1.0** contact hour.

- Attendees must remain on the webinar **for at least 50 minutes** and are required to complete the evaluation post session, in order to receive contact hours.



Moderator and Panelists



MODERATOR

Adrienne McIntyre



PANELIST

Elena Rhoads-Baeza



PANELIST

April Ricotta



PANELIST

Zakiyyah Smith

Objectives

1. Discuss the key recommendations of ACOG Committee Statement No. 31, Partnering With Doulas in Clinical Settings (2026), including the evidence linking continuous doula support to shorter labor, fewer cesarean deliveries, and higher birth satisfaction .
2. Explore common clinical and hospital administrator concerns, such as liability, scope, and workflows, and identify strategies to address them.
3. Identify strategies to increase clinicians' understanding of the doula role and integration into health systems, including staff education, hospital doula policies, advisory boards, and referral pathways.

ACOG Committee Statement 31 (8/2026)
Partnering with Doulas

- ACOG Advancing Equity in Obstetric and Gynecologic Health Care
- Endorsed by
  - DONA International
  - Doula Trainings International
  - the National Black Doulas Association
  - the National Health Law Program
- Encourages strong partnerships between clinicians and doulas
- Improve experience and outcomes, decrease healthcare costs

Improve experiences and outcomes

- Partnerships and continuous support during birth demonstrated improvements:
  - communication
  - shorter length of labor
  - fewer cesarean deliveries
  - higher birth satisfaction
  - higher rates of breastfeeding initiation
  - patient-centered care
  - accountability in the health care team
  - continuity of care
- Address Barriers with
  - training and policy
  - approaches that promote collaboration, communication, and accountability
  - co-learning and collaboration to embrace the benefits
  - facilitate working together to improve perinatal outcomes.

ACOG Recommendations

- **OBGYN should learn about birth workers' spectrum of practice and the benefits of their work.**
- **OBGYN should create respectful teams including birth workers to benefit patients and the workplace.**
- **OBGYN should educate patients about options and be aware of local resources.**
- **OBGYN should be aware of coverage and access options for birth worker support.**
- **OBGYN should support research on partnerships with birth workers.**

UC San Diego Health

Hearts & Hands Volunteer Doula Program



Hearts & Hands Doulas at UC San Diego Health

27 years of operation; >1400 doulas trained, >8800 births supported

1999

- Hearts & Hands Volunteer Doula Program began at UC San Diego Health

2024

- New team managing the program, focus on health equity, growth and diversity

2025

- First and second cohort of community refugee doulas
  - Partnered with the Refugee and Immigrant Health Unit, UCSD and IRC, San Deigo
- 18 doulas representing five countries and speaking nine languages trained to provide culturally and linguistically congruent perinatal support to their community

2026

- First and second cohort of nursing student doulas trained
  - Partnered with UCSD Extended Studies, Human Resources and local nursing schools
- 47 Nursing students trained and mentored as doulas

2027

- Seven cohorts to be trained
- Two research papers to be published
- Three grants to support programming

Current Doula Status

- We currently have 128 doulas who are active in the program
  - 16 in the newcomer doula group
  - 32 in the health profession student group
  - 80 Labor Support Doulas
    - 18 of them are trained in Postpartum
  - 50% of these doulas speak more than one language, representing 24 languages





2026 Data

- Thus far in 2026, we have supported 16% of the births at UC San Diego Health 742/4719
- Our NTSV C/S rate for 2026 is 14.3% (53/370) compared to a hospital wide 21%
- Our rate of epidural use is 63.5% (385/606) Compared to a hospital wide 79%
- We received 133 referrals through EMR and matched 86% of them. Patients are connected with doulas for prenatal care, labor support, postpartum care, IUFD support, and abortion care services
- Advanced doula matching considers language, culture, lived experience, & patient preference

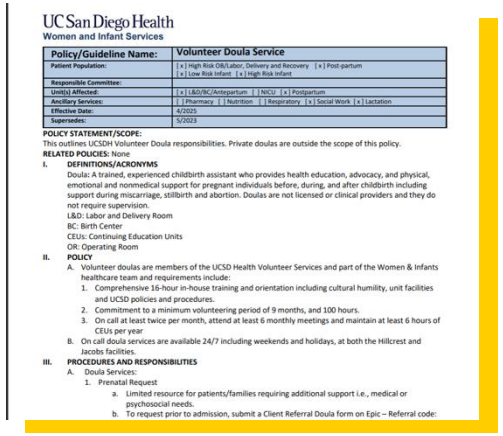


Programmatic Pillars



Advisory Board

We have a five-member doula advisory board with integration into The Unit Based Practice Council for nursing


UC San Diego Health
Women and Infant Services

Policy/Guideline Name:	Volunteer Doula Service
Patient Population:	[x] High Risk OB/Labor, Delivery and Recovery [x] Post-partum [x] Low Risk Infant [x] High Risk Infant
Responsible Committee:	
Unit(s) Affected:	[x] L&D/RC/Antepartum [ ] NICU [x] Postpartum
Ancillary Services:	[ ] Pharmacy [ ] Nutrition [ ] Respiratory [x] Social Work [x] Lactation
Effective Date:	4/2025
Supersedes:	5/2023

POLICY STATEMENT/SCOPE:
This outlines UCSDH Volunteer Doula responsibilities. Private doulas are outside the scope of this policy.

RELATED POLICIES: None

I. DEFINITIONS/ACRONYMS
Doula: A trained, experienced childbirth assistant who provides health education, advocacy, and physical, emotional and nonmedical support for pregnant individuals before, during, and after childbirth including support during miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion. Doulas are not licensed or clinical providers and they do not require supervision.
L&D: Labor and Delivery Room
BC: Birth Center
CEUs: Continuing Education Units
OR: Operating Room

II. POLICY
A. Volunteer doulas are members of the UCSD Health Volunteer Services and part of the Women & Infants healthcare team and requirements include:
1. Comprehensive 16-hour in-house training and orientation including cultural humility, unit facilities and UCSD policies and procedures.
2. Commitment to a minimum volunteering period of 9 months, and 100 hours.
3. On call at least twice per month, attend at least 6 monthly meetings and maintain at least 6 hours of CEUs per year
B. On call doula services are available 24/7 including weekends and holidays, at both the Hillcrest and Jacobs facilities.

III. PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
A. Doula Services:
1. Prenatal Request
a. Limited resource for patients/families requiring additional support i.e., medical or psychosocial needs.
b. To request prior to admission, submit a Client Referral Doula form on Epic – Referral code:

Policies

Hospital doula policies are in place, utilized and updated every two years



Training

A multidisciplinary team trains Doulas



Team Members

Doulas are valued members of the healthcare team

The Mid-Coastal California Perinatal Outreach Program Presents

Advanced Fetal Monitoring Webinar

MCCPOP

Mid-Coastal California
Perinatal Outreach Program

Monday, December 7, 2026 | 1:00pm – 4:00pm PT Live on Zoom, *Registration Required*

This three-hour workshop focuses on the principles of advanced fetal monitoring knowledge and the skills necessary in clinical practice. Utilizing a case-study format, we will analyze complex FHR patterns/characteristics, underlying maternal-fetal physiology related to various maternal complications, appropriate interventions, documentation, communication and risk-management strategies.

Participants in this webinar will:

- Improve decision-making and critical thinking skills by utilizing standardized terminology, protocols and patient safety principles in EFM strip analysis.
- Review the relationship between maternal/fetal physiology and fetal heart rate patterns.
- Discuss the medical/legal implications of EFM through case review to reduce errors, improve outcomes and ultimately decrease liability.
- Review the importance of excellent communication and teamwork to improve outcomes.

MCCPOP

Questions? Email Us:
contactmccpop@stanford.edu

Visit: www.mccpop.org

The Mid-Coastal California Perinatal Outreach Program (MCCPOP) is approved by the California Board of Registered Nursing, Provider Number 3104 for 3.0 contact hours.

Contact Us

Adrienne McIntyre
adrienne.m.mcintyre@gmail.com

Elena Rhoads-Baeza
mrhoads@hs.uci.edu

April Ricotta
aricotta@health.ucsd.edu

Zakiyyah Smith
zkysmith@gmail..com

www.CMQCC.org

Info@CMQCC.org

CMQCC

California Maternal
Quality Care Collaborative