DOULA: a nonmedical person who assists a woman before, during, or after childbirth, as well as her partner and/or family by providing information, physical assistance, and emotional support.

What does a Doula do?

When hiring or requesting a doula, you can rest assured knowing he or she:

- Understands the physiology of birth and the emotional needs of a woman in labor
- Helps the mother in planning and executing birth plans
- Respects the preferred birth plan of the mother
- Provides continuous labor support during childbirth, working together with mother and partner
- Does not replace the partner or support person of the mother
- Allows the mother’s partner or support person to participate in delivery at their comfort level
- Facilitates communication between the laboring woman, her partner or support person and her clinical care providers
- Recognizes birth as a key experience the mother will remember all her life and aims to create an environment to help make birth enjoyable

Studies have shown that when a doula is present for delivery:

- Results in shortened labor with fewer complications
- Reduces negative feelings about one’s childbirth experience
- Reduces the need for pitocin (a labor-inducing drug), forceps or vacuum extraction and cesareans
- Reduces the mother’s request for pain medication and/or epidurals
- Keeps partners and support persons involved in delivery, resulting in deeper emotional bonds between mother and partner

New parents report that having a doula present for delivery resulted in:

- Feeling more secure and cared for during delivery and recovery
- More success in adapting to bringing home baby
- More successful outcomes with breastfeeding
- Experiencing greater confidence in parenting skills
- Lowered rates of experiencing some or all symptoms of post-partum depression
- Lowered reported incidences of child abuse or neglect