Dou·la /ˈdouələ/

By Breana Davis, Swedish Contracted Doula

Vomit Catcher
Back Massager
Breaker of Awkward Moments
Holder of Modesty
Storyteller
Counter of Contractions
Champion That All Births Are Natural
Diary of Ancestral Birth Stories
Excited To Do It Differently
Poet
Second Baby Holder
Swaddler

First Pee Cheerleader
First Poop Enthusiast
Tealight Candles and a Rebozo
Reassuring Smile
Heated Blanket for Postpartum Shivers
Hint of Lavender or Mint
Hip Squeezer
Deep Whale Sound
Birth 2 Stepper
Presenter of Pronouns
Auntie
Homegirl

Model for Support Team
Asker of Permission
Teary-Eyed Greeter of Tiny Humans
Open Phone Line
Excited for Your 3am Calls
Validator of Prodomal Labor
Normalizer of Preferences
Someone to Yell at When There is No More Coconut Water
Someone to Remind You that You’re Strong
Someone to Help You Surrender Even When It’s Scary

Swedish Hospital Doula Services
Annual Report
Celebrating the third birthday of the Swedish Hospital Doula Program in January 2019, the doulas are beginning to serve repeat clients. 20 clients came back in 2018 to hire a doula again for their second baby.

The newest addition to the doula program in 2018 is **Bereavement Doula Services**, for parents who find out their baby has died in utero or is likely to die shortly after birth. 13 doulas attended a specialized training to offer this support.

The bereavement doulas meet with families prior to the birth, attend the delivery and assist families to make memories with their babies.

The doulas then support the families for a year after the death of the baby with home visits focused on grief processing, a warm meal, and resources.

The program is free for families, funded by gifts from grateful families to the Swedish foundation.

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"We had a fantastic birth experience with Laurie as our doula in 2016. When I became pregnant with our second son in 2018, we knew we wanted Laurie to be there again. She is warm, easy to talk to, funny, and a great listener. Not only was Laurie helpful on the day of, but she met with us prior to the birth and helped us talk through what would be important in natural childbirth. Her expertise and passion for childbirth made it a great experience - both times."

- Megan Walton, Client

As Megan and Sean Walton started planning for the arrival of their second child this past November, they hired Swedish Doula Laurie Levy to be by their side again. Here’s big brother William with baby Thomas.

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4.8 out of 5
overall patient satisfaction

821
births attended by Swedish doulas in 2018

83%
of patients say their experience with the Swedish Doula Program makes them more likely to recommend Swedish hospital to other expecting parents.
The doulas were asked to train hundreds of Swedish nurses in additional positions for pushing.

“I love the teamwork that takes place between the doulas and the nurses! Each time I work with one of the doulas, I learn something new that allows me to more wholly and effectively care for my patients. The second stage positioning training at the Swedish Nursing Symposium was another opportunity to do just that!”
- Amanda Schmarr, L&D Nurse at Swedish

“The Swedish doula program has been a great benefit for women and families at First Hill. As a labor nurse, I’m grateful for the chance to cultivate ongoing relationships with doulas that improve patient care. I’m always glad to see familiar faces of doulas that I’ve worked with before to know that families are getting great support.”
- Heather Rosewarne, L&D Nurse at Swedish

98% of doctors, midwives, and nurses say the doula had a positive impact on the patient’s experience

98% of nurses and providers want to work with the Swedish doula again

In January 2017 the Swedish Doula Program began offering free services to low-income patients in addition to paying clients.

We more than doubled this part of our program in 2018. The doulas served 212 low-income patients at no cost to the family in 2018, up from 82 in 2017.

87% people of color

- 40% African American
- 36% Latina
- 10% Asian
- 13% White
- 1% Native American

67% spoke a primary language other than English

- 33% English
- 26% Spanish
- 14% Somali
- 8% Amharic
- 6% Other
- 3% Tigrinya
- 3% Chinese
- 2% Oromo
- 1% French

We hired doulas who speak Mandarin, Japanese, Amharic, and American Sign Language in 2018, and now have doulas who are fluent in a total of 13 languages including those and: Spanish, Portuguese, Somali, Swahili, French, Polish, Russian, German, and Italian.

When I did my training as a birth doula, a sentence was engraved in my mind. “Every mother deserves a doula.” I feel happy to be a part of this wonderful program that gives the access of doula services for those mothers of extreme vulnerability, with low incomes, low access to culturally appropriate birth educations, immigrants, communities affected by inequity. When a mother says “Thank you, I did not feel alone, I will forever remember your loving support” I know we are building a stronger community.”
- Andrea Balina, Doula

The birthing families I serve are either refugees or low income people of color. Some of them have been through difficult life trauma and worry about giving birth in an unknown place. To have someone that look likes them and knows the hospital settings they told me they feel less scared and can rely on me by supporting their birth plan.”
- Idil Danan, Doula
In continuing our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, doula program management participated in a hospital-wide Equity Assessment, and helped to coordinate a segment at the annual Swedish Women’s Health Summit to engage the audience of doctors and nurses in a discussion about key diversity and inclusion concepts.

**ALLY** A person or group engaged in a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and groups of people. It is not self-defined; efforts must be recognized by the people we sought to ally with.

We continue to emphasize equity themes in our doula team meetings, holding a training in October led by three of our African American doulas titled, “Observing & Experiencing Racism as African-Americans in Maternity Care.”

The program awarded 5 scholarships for doula training and certification in 2017 through the Doula Diversity Scholarship run in partnership with the Swedish Community Engagement department, the third year of the scholarship.

"I loved how easy the entire process was with Swedish Doula services. From the very first phone call, it just all felt easy. We very much appreciated the option to hire an apprentice doula as well, which fit better into our budget and felt like an excellent value. Our doula helped me feel more prepared for our labor experience. Even when things didn’t go according to “plan,” she was there for us and helped me feel like everything would be fine. During labor, she was a wonderfully consistent support for me and helped me feel calm.”

- Patient

**Looking Ahead...**

The Swedish Doula Program has been an active member of a state-wide coalition in Washington advocating for reimbursement for Doula services by Medicaid. As a result of the coalition’s work, Governor Jay Inslee included funding for doula care under Medicaid in his budget recommendations. The coalition has organized the first ever Doula Lobby Day on February 5th and will be visiting Olympia to encourage legislators to include the funding in the final state budget this year.