
PATIENT COPY

Date: _____

To whom it may concern,

Due to the recent spread of COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus, I am aware that some hospitals are limiting and placing restrictions on their patients from having visitors to help minimize the spread of this illness. At this time, I _____ care provider at _____, am supporting my patient, _____, in their rights to have the labor support they desire, including both their partner and doula's support in the birth room; as both parties are not visitors, but important members of my patient's birth team. I affirm that patients use doulas for very specific and personal reasons, and hope you continue to support parents' ability to negotiate care with true autonomy and shared decision making, including the freedom to access professional labor support. For further explanation in support of my advocacy for my patient and doulas as a vital part of the birth team, I have included more information below.

Thank you,

Contact Information: _____

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines on caring for a mother with COVID-19 recommend healthcare facilities follow, "infection control guidance on managing visitor access, including essential support persons for women in labor" (Interim Considerations for Infection Prevention and Control of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Inpatient Obstetric Healthcare Settings, February 2020). They go on to state, "If restriction of all visitors is implemented, facilities can consider exceptions based on end-of-life situations or when a visitor is essential for the patient's emotional well-being and care."

Doulas, are hired by clients specifically to provide emotional and informational support in an unfamiliar institutional setting that carries its own well- documented and well- reported risks to birthing persons and their babies. As ACOG has acknowledged: "Evidence suggests that, in addition to regular nursing care, continuous one-to-one emotional support provided by support personnel, such as a doula, is associated with improved outcomes for women in labor." COVID-19 does not change the inherent risk of giving birth in the USA, but doulas do.

The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal (AWHONN) has also taken a position on doulas with patients during COVID-19. AWHONN recognizes that doula services contribute to the woman's preparation for and support during childbirth and opposes hospital policies that restrict the presence of a doula during a woman's active labor. AWHONN member Nancy Travis, MS, BSN, RN, BC, CPN, CBC, Florida Section Chair has recently released this statement:

"Doulas are not visitors and should not be blocked from caring for patients in the antepartum, intrapartum and postpartum period. Most doulas have been contracted by patients weeks to months ahead of time and have established provider relationships. They are recognized by AWHONN and ACOG as essential personnel and part of the maternity care team."

AWHONN supports doulas as partners in care and acknowledges their ability to provide physical, emotional, and partner support to women. AWHONN opposes hospital policies that restrict the presence of a doula in the inpatient setting during an infectious disease outbreak.

For even more information on the critical, researched based impact of doula support for laboring families with proven positive outcomes, please refer to:

DONA International's Position Paper, or Evidence Based Birth's Evidence on Doulas, or WHO's "Companion of Choice" Brief

DOULA COPY

Date: _____

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CARE PROVIDER COPY TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CARE FACILITY

Date: _____

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