

Resource Document

Getting Your Doula Business Up & Running



There are a variety of ways that you might work as a doula with birthing families. Some people work as independent contractors or employees of an agency, hospital-based doula program, birth center, community organization, or other established doula team. Another option is to start your own business. Any of these options could be combined, and any could potentially include community doula work, as well as free or low-cost offerings (see more about fee-setting below).

Some first steps that may be helpful:

- Research how doulas in your area tend to work. What is available in terms of agencies, hospital/birth center teams, community organizations, etc.?
- Connect with other doulas in your area. Many localities have listservs, forums, Facebook groups, etc. for local practitioners.
- Create a business plan outlining your goals, as well as your strategies for achieving those goals.
- Set your fees and finalize any needed paperwork such as contracts,



- handouts, etc; and/or finalize contractual arrangements with the organization(s) that you have chosen to work with.
- Check out workshops or books on how to start/maintain/build a small business. You can find resources relevant to the U.S. on the [Small Business Administration website](#).
 - Purchase liability insurance* and any necessary supplies (see supply lists below).

*To help you in your search, two U.S. based companies that provide insurance for doulas and childbirth educators are [Alternative Balance Professional Group](#), and [CM&F Group Inc.](#) *If you purchase insurance through these links BfW may receive a small affiliate bonus.*
 - Connect with other people who offer services to birthing people, such as prenatal yoga teachers, massage therapists, midwives, childbirth educators, and lactation consultants, in order to introduce yourself, build community, and generate referrals.
 - Begin or update your online presence. This may include building a website, or creating social media pages for your business.
 - Work on branding. This might include a logo, an overall style, key concepts, etc. (It's probably a good idea to do these last three bullet points even if you are working within an organization for now. It's always helpful to have an individual identity/brand/network of your own.)

*What are some other ideas that you have thought of,
or that you might try?*

Setting Fees

There are lots of options when it comes to pricing your services, and you will need to think carefully about your goals, priorities, and needs. Here



are a few of the things that you might need to take into consideration when setting your fee:

- Your expenses (supplies, childcare, taxes, books, trainings, organizational memberships, etc.).
- Cost of other doula services in your community.
- Your target audience.
- How much you need to make in order to feel that your time is being properly compensated -- remember to include on-call time in your calculations.

You may choose to have offerings at a variety of price points, including free or low-cost community offerings. You may choose to use a [sliding scale](#) so that higher prices subsidize the lower ones. You might also look around for organizations in your area that have grants or other funding to provide the community with affordable services, or you might even band together with other birth workers to start such an organization.

Some people who provide other services (childbirth education, massage, lactation) may consider offering package discounts on combined services.

You can reassess your fees periodically, evaluating how they may need to change in order to suit your needs and those of your community.

Supplies

Mentoring Supplies

The following list of supplies are recommendations for items to have on hand to teach the variety of BfW processes that you might introduce in prenatal and postpartum appointments. For meetings that take place at



clients' homes, you might ask them to provide some of the supplies -- particularly for the ice exercises.

- Stopwatch or timer
- A bell or chimes
- Paper towels, washcloths, or dish towels
- Ice
- Cooler or refrigerator
- Cups or bowls
- Chalk Pastels
- Drawing paper
- Markers
- Smooth cardboard, foam board, or pressed wood for parents to use as a hard surface
- A surface for you to write on -- white board, large paper, etc -- and the appropriate writing utensils for that surface
- Tarp or cloth to protect floors
- Model pelvis
- Infant doll
- Model placenta/uterus/umbilical cord
- Books -- perhaps even a lending library
- A deck such as the [Heart Centered Pregnancy Deck](#)

Birth Supplies

(This list also appears in the “Preparing for Labor” section of this course; there is also a birth supplies list for parents.)

New doulas tend to have lots of questions about what they should bring to births. It's worth noting that the most important thing for you to bring is yourself -- your mind, heart, and body are the truly crucial tools that both you and your clients will be relying upon. That said, it can definitely be helpful to you and your clients if you have some stuff with you! The list below is just suggestions and ideas; you will build your own list of must-haves and favorite tools as you go. As you assemble your doula bag, keep in mind that no matter what kind of birth is being planned, you should be ready to spend significant amounts of time at both home and hospital. Remember, too, to coordinate with your clients -- if they are bringing a birth ball, portable speaker, etc., then you may not need to.

Personal items

- Change of clothes (or at least extra underwear)



- Layers (hoodie/sweater, scarf, etc. -- these might end up doubling as a pillow)
- Toiletries (menstrual supplies, toothbrush/toothpaste, deodorant, contact lens/glasses-related supplies, etc.)
- Medications (prescriptions, analgesics, antihistamines, etc.)
- Reading material
- Phone charger
- Earbuds
- Water bottle/travel mug
- Non-perishable, easy-to-eat snacks (granola bars, fruit, dried fruit, instant oatmeal packets, etc.)
- Water/sports drinks/coconut water
- Hot beverages (tea bags, instant coffee packets, instant soup packets, etc.)
- Hard candies (for throat soothing or nausea; consider cough drops, sour candies, ginger candies, etc.)
- Gum/mints

Labor support items

- Birth ball
- Massage tools
- Massage oil/lotion
- Length of cloth for position support, counterpressure, etc.
- Essential oils/essential oil wipes
- Bendy straws
- Hot/cold pack supplies (hot water bottle, rice sock [if birth location has a microwave], frozen plastic water bottle, large ziploc bags for ice, etc.)
- Combs/textured balls for gripping
- Objects/images for ambiance/focal point (battery-operated candle, small labyrinth image, etc.)
- Music-listening supplies (pre-made playlists, portable speaker, etc. -- coordinate with your clients)
- Breastfeeding props
- Images or models of labyrinths
- Books -- perhaps even a lending library
- A deck such as the [Heart Centered Pregnancy Deck](#)



A Solution-Focused Reflection:

*If you look ahead and imagine your future self
looking back in one year...*

If you have reached your business goals, what two or three things will have happened? Describe how you will know that you have “succeeded.”

What are the first small steps you are taking to build your practice?

How will parents discover you and your offerings?

Ways BfW supports your business: listing in directory for parents, amplifies your social media posts, offers ongoing free continuing education, and peer and mentor support. And more!

Additional Resources: [Small Business Administration](#), [Structural & Legal Information](#)

