

# STATE-CERTIFIED DOULA: CODE OF ETHICS

## PURPOSE OF THIS CODE

The State-Certified Doula Code of Ethics is based on the core values adopted by DONA International and revised by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), in partnership with the Virginia Doula Task Force, to emphasize the critical role of community-based doulas. The Code of Ethics outlined in this document provides a framework for state-certified doulas, supervisors, and employers of state-certified doulas to discuss ethical issues facing the profession.

### I. Rules of Conduct

- A. Propriety. State-certified doulas maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identity as doulas.
- B. Competence and Professional Development. State-certified doulas strive to become and remain proficient in the professional practice and the performance of professional functions through continuing education, affiliation with related organizations, and associations with other doulas.
- C. Integrity. State-certified doulas act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.

### II. Ethical Responsibility to Clients

- A. Priority of Client's Interests. State-certified doulas' primary responsibility is to their clients.
- B. Rights and Prerogatives of Clients. State-certified doulas make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of their clients.
- C. Confidentiality and Privacy. State-certified doulas respect the confidentiality, privacy, and trust of individuals, families, and communities that they serve. State-certified doulas understand and abide by employer policies, as well as state and federal confidentiality laws that are relevant to their work.
- D. Quality of Care. State-certified doulas strive to provide high quality services to individuals, families, and communities through continued education, training, and an obligation to ensure the information they provide is up-to-date and accurate. When the state-certified doula agrees to work with a particular client, their obligation is to do so reliably, without fail, for the term of the agreement.
- E. Scope of Ability and Training. State-certified doulas strive to expand their professional knowledgebase and competencies through education and participation in professional organizations. State-certified doulas will remain up to date on any developments that substantially affect their ability to competently render services. State-certified doulas are transparent about qualifications, competencies, and limitations on services they may provide and must not misrepresent qualifications or competencies to individuals, families, communities, or employers.
- F. Referral of Appropriate Services. State-certified doulas acknowledge when client issues are outside of their scope of practice and refer clients to the appropriate health, wellness, or social support services when necessary.

- G. **Wellness and Safety.** State-certified doulas are aware of their own personal well-being (physical, mental, and spiritual health) and strive to maintain a safe environment for themselves and the communities they serve.
- H. **Advocacy for the Profession.** State-certified doulas are advocates for the profession and are members, leaders, and active participants in local, state, and national professional organizations.
- I. **Professional Obligations.** State-certified doulas have an obligation to report actual or potential harm to individuals within the communities they serve to the appropriate authorities. State-certified doulas have a responsibility to follow requirements set by states, the federal government, and/or their employing organizations.
- J. **Fees.** When setting fees, state-certified doulas ensure that they are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with services performed. State-certified doulas must clearly state their fees to the client and describe the services provided, terms of payment and refund policies.

### **III. Promotion of Equitable Relationships**

- A. **Community-Based Approach.** State-certified doulas are required to be community-based doulas. A community-based doula is a doula who often has shared lived experiences and is trained to provide extended, culturally congruent support to families throughout pregnancy to include antepartum, intrapartum, during labor and birth, and up to one year postpartum. Community-based doulas provide an expanded set of services and play a crucial role in improving outcomes and experiences for communities most affected by discrimination and disparities in health outcomes.
- B. **Cultural Humility.** State-certified doulas possess expertise in the communities in which they serve. They maintain a high degree of humility and respect for the cultural diversity within each community. As advocates for their communities, doulas may need to inform employers and others when policies and procedures will offend or harm communities or are ineffective within the communities where they work.
- C. **Maintaining the Trust of the Community.** State-certified doulas are members of their communities and their effectiveness in providing services is derived from the trust placed in them by members of these communities. Doulas do not act in ways that could jeopardize the trust placed in them by the communities they serve. Doulas value and respect the expertise and knowledge that each community member possesses. In turn, doulas strive to create equitable partnerships with communities to address all issues of health and well-being.
- D. **Respect for Human Rights.** State-certified doulas maintain professional relationships with clients. They establish, respect, and actively maintain personal boundaries between them and their clients.
- E. **Anti-Discrimination.** State-certified doulas do not discriminate against any person or group based on age, sex, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, ability status, marital status, or any other legally recognized protected group.