Half of all children born in the United States are delivered with the help of a midwife attendant. Granny Midwives, typically Black women in the south, assist in countless births from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s. Immigrant midwives from Europe, Mexico, and Japan practice birth work in other parts of the country.

New York City opens the first municipally-sponsored American midwifery school, called Bellevue Hospital School for Midwives. Births attended by Bellevue-trained midwives have lower maternal and infant mortality rates than the city-wide average.

Prominent obstetrician Dr. Joseph DeLee speaks out against midwives at the American Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality annual meeting, spreading the falsehood that midwives cannot safely care for pregnant women.

Modern day concept of the “doula” emerges from the natural birth movement’s desire for low-intervention, unmedicated births. The term is first used by Dr. Dana Raphael, a breastfeeding advocate who derives the term from the modern Greek term for “servant-woman.”

Direct entry midwives develop out of feminist efforts to reclaim bodily and birth autonomy.

Doulas of North America, now DONA International, is founded, becoming one of the first organizations to train and certify doulas.

Oregon’s Medicaid program begins providing coverage for doula care. Minnesota follows two years later.

States across the country begin introducing bills relating to Medicaid coverage for doula care. In 2019, Indiana and New Jersey pass bills providing Medicaid coverage for doula services, while Washington passes a budget item.