



California Doula Medi-Cal Benefit FAQ for Advocates

What is a doula?

Doulas are birth workers who provide health education, advocacy, and physical, emotional, and social support for pregnant and postpartum persons during the prenatal period, labor and delivery, postpartum, and during miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion. They are not medical providers.

For more information about the doula Medi-Cal benefit, please see the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) webpage on [Doula Services as a Medi-Cal Benefit](#).

Who is allowed to provide doula care for Medi-Cal enrollees?

In order to be eligible for reimbursement from Medi-Cal, doulas must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Possess adult and infant CPR certification;
- Complete a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training; and
- Meet either the training or experience qualifications pathway, more details of which can be found in [All Plan Letter 22-031](#).

Eligible doulas must then enroll with the DHCS as Medi-Cal providers. Doulas providing services to Medi-Cal managed care enrollees must additionally contract with the Medi-Cal managed care plan(s) for which they provide care. For more information about the process for doulas to sign up as Medi-Cal Providers, see the DHCS webpages on [Doula Application Information](#) and [Doulas - Training as Medi-Cal Providers](#).

Who can access doula care?

All Medi-Cal enrollees who are pregnant or were pregnant within the past year qualify for access to full spectrum doula care. Services can be provided during pregnancy, labor and delivery, miscarriage, abortion, and within one year of the end of the pregnancy.

Covered doula services are available to all eligible Medi-Cal enrollees without cost-sharing, co-payments, or any additional out-of-pocket costs.

How do Medi-Cal enrollees access doula services?

Doula services must be recommended by a licensed “practitioner of the healing arts.” The licensed provider can be a physician, nurse midwife, nurse practitioner, licensed midwife, or behavioral health care provider (this is a non-inclusive list). The recommending provider also does not need to be a Medi-Cal provider or in-network provider with the Medi-Cal enrollees’ managed care plan.

The recommendation can be provided through any of the following methods:

- Written recommendation in an enrollee’s medical record;
- Standing order by a licensed provider at a health plan, physician group, or other group, recommending doula services for those who meet certain criteria (e.g. pregnant or postpartum enrollees); or
- Standard form signed by a licensed provider that a Medi-Cal enrollee can provide to the doula they wish to work with. For an example of a form that includes the required information, see the sample form provided by DHCS at <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Documents/DoulaREC.pdf>.

How can Medi-Cal enrollees find a doula?

DHCS is creating a central directory of doulas who have been approved as Medi-Cal providers. Once this directory is complete, it will be made available on the DHCS website.

Medi-Cal enrollees in managed care can also contact their managed care plan to request information about doulas who are contracted with the managed care plan.

How many doula appointments are covered by Medi-Cal?

Medi-Cal enrollees are entitled to:

- One (1) initial visit;
- Up to eight (8) additional visits that can be used in any combination of prenatal and postpartum visits;
- Support during labor and delivery (including labor and delivery resulting in a stillbirth), abortion, or miscarriage; and
- Up to two (2) extended three-hour postpartum visits up to one year after the end of pregnancy. These two (2) extended postpartum visits do not require any additional criteria or recommendation.

For additional postpartum visits beyond those delineated above, a second recommendation is required. This second recommendation must be specific to the Medi-Cal enrollee and cannot be a standing order, and authorizes up to nine additional postpartum visits.

How long can a Medi-Cal enrollee continue to receive doula services?

Medi-Cal enrollees can begin receiving doula care anytime during their pregnancy or after the end of their pregnancy. This is regardless if their pregnancy ends in childbirth, abortion, miscarriage, or stillbirth. They can continue receiving doula care up to one year after the end of the pregnancy.

Are doulas allowed to accompany their patients to the hospital?

The California Department of Public Health has issued guidance recommending that a doula should be allowed to be present during labor and delivery so long as the doula meets other relevant visitor guidelines. For the most recent guidance, see [All Facilities Letter 21-31.2 on Visitor Limitation Guidance at General Acute Care Hospitals](#).

Can doulas provide services via telehealth?

Yes, doulas can provide services via telehealth for prenatal or postpartum visits, labor and delivery support, and for abortion and miscarriage support. Doulas can provide telehealth services through real-time audio only calls or video calls.

Can doulas provide services at Medi-Cal enrollees' homes?

Yes. There are no place of service restrictions for doulas. Doulas can provide services in the homes of Medi-Cal enrollees or in other locations.

What if the Medi-Cal enrollee has an abortion?

Abortion doula support is a part of the doula benefit. Enrollees may use either a prenatal or postpartum visit on the day of the abortion, and are able to use any remaining postpartum visits for further post-abortion support.

What if the Medi-Cal enrollee is undocumented?

Medi-Cal enrollees who are undocumented are eligible for the full range of doula Medi-Cal services, even if they are not eligible for full-scope Medi-Cal.

Can a Medi-Cal enrollee have more than one prenatal or postpartum visit in one day?

No, Medi-Cal only covers one doula visit per day. The exception is that one prenatal visit or one postpartum visit can be provided on the same day as doula care during labor and delivery, stillbirth, abortion, or miscarriage support.

Can a Medi-Cal enrollee have more than one doula?

Yes, a Medi-Cal enrollee can have more than one doula. However, Medi-Cal only covers one visit per day, so only one doula can bill for one visit provided to the same Medi-Cal enrollee on the same day. The exception is that if there is one prenatal visit or one postpartum visit provided on the same day as doula care during labor and delivery, stillbirth, abortion, or miscarriage support, the prenatal or postpartum visit can be billed by a different doula.

What if I cannot access a doula or have a problem with the service?

If you are having problems accessing a doula, or have a problem with the service, you can contact the Health Consumer Alliance at 888-804-3536/TTY 877-735-2929 or at www.healthconsumer.org.

If you believe you were wrongfully denied doula services, you can request a state hearing:

- Online at <https://acms.dss.ca.gov/acms/login.request.do>
- By phone; Call 1-800-952-5253/TTY 1-800-952-8349

- By mail. Send your name, address, telephone number, name of the health plan (if you are enrolled in one) that denied the service, a detailed reason why you want a hearing, whether you need specific language assistance at the hearing, and the contact information for an authorized representative if you have one, to the California Department of Social Services, State Hearings Division, P.O. Box 944243, Mail Station 9-17-442, Sacramento, California 94244-2430

Where can I get more information about the doula Medi-Cal benefit?

For more information about the doula Medi-Cal benefit, please see the DHCS website on [Doula Services as a Medi-Cal Benefit](#).

Other References

Doula Services as a Medi-Cal Benefit, CA Department of Health Care Services, <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/Doula-Services.aspx>.

California State Plan Amendment 22-0002, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, (Jan. 27, 2023), <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/laws/Documents/SPA-22-0002-Approval.pdf>.

All Plan Letter 22-031, CA Department of Health Care Services, (Dec. 27, 2022), <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/MMCDAPLsandPolicyLetters/APL2022/APL22-031-Doula-Services.pdf>.

Medi-Cal Provider Manual: Doula Services, CA Department of Health Care Services, (Dec. 2022), <https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/masters-mtp/part2/doula.pdf>.

Doulas - Training as Medi-Cal Providers, CA Department of Health Care Services, <https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/doulas.aspx>.

Doula Application Information, CA Department of Health Care Services, <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/pages/doula.aspx>.

Doula FAQ Sheet, CA Department of Health Care Services, <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Documents/Doula-FAQ-Sheet.pdf>.

Doula Medicaid Project, National Health Law Program, <https://healthlaw.org/doulamedicaidproject>.





ALL PREGNANT AND POSTPARTUM PEOPLE DESERVE ACCESS
TO FULL SPECTRUM DOULA CARE.



<https://healthlaw.org/doulamedicaidproject>