

# BIRTH COMPANIONS

Program of the  
Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing (JHSON)  
Center for Community Programs, Innovation, and Scholarship (COMPASS)  
Office of Associate Dean for Community Programs



## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Birth Companions Program was started by nursing students interested in doula care. Faculty members offered the training and students provided on-call doula services.

In 1998, a two-credit clinical course was taught by a faculty and an educator certified by the Doulas of North America (DONA). The students learned about theories of maternal and community health nursing and the use of supportive techniques during childbirth, such as massage, breathing methods, different body positions, cold compresses, hot showers, and the use of birthing balls.

Presently, Birth Companions is a course and program designed to teach students how to be a doula, and work with women and families throughout the pregnancy.

To receive credit for the course, *Community Perspectives on the Childbearing Process*, students attend all classes and provide doula care to clients. The program educates student nurses to serve in a doula role and accompany women and families during the childbirth process. Students receive doula training from a DONA-certified educator and learn about maternal-child and public health from school faculty.

## BIRTH COMPANIONS:

- Provide service free of charge.
- Work only at the mother's request. They have NO clinical responsibilities.
- Will accompany the mother to the hospital of her choice, where she has planned to give birth.
- Work only in the role of doula. Though they are nursing students, they have NO clinical responsibilities.

Students provide doula care to one client, making a prenatal and a postpartum visit to the mother and attending her labor and birth at the hospital of the mother's choosing in the Baltimore metropolitan area. Students who choose to take on additional clients are paid for their services through the School of Nursing Community Outreach program.

There are numerous benefits demonstrated with continuous support provided by a doula. Mothers supported by doulas are more likely to have spontaneous vaginal births and shorter labors and are less likely to have cesarean or instrumental deliveries, require analgesia, or have babies with low five-minute apgar scores. Women who have doulas report more satisfaction with the birth process (Hodnett, 2013). Six weeks after childbirth, women who use doulas are more likely to be breastfeeding, are significantly less anxious, have lower scores on a test of depression, and have higher levels of self-esteem.

Hodnett, E. D., Gates, S., Hofmeyr, G. J., & Sakala, C. (2013). Continuous support for women during childbirth. The Cochrane Library.

## BIRTH COMPANIONS SELF-REFERRAL:

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