

---

## REQUIREMENTS FOR DONA INTERNATIONAL BIRTH DOULA CERTIFICATION

### I. Verify that you are a current member of DONA International.

To verify that your membership is current, check the date that is printed on your mailing label of the *International Doula* magazine. You must be a current member on the day that you mail your completed application for certification. You may pay for your membership fee on-line at the DONA Boutique, [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org), or by contacting the DONA International Home Office. Please note that if you are not a current member when you send in your packet, it may delay the review of your application.

### II. Pay your Certification Application Processing Fee

When you are ready to submit your completed certification application to the Certification Committee for review, please enclose your certification application processing fee in U.S. funds; check or money order made payable to DONA International. Certification application processing fees are based on the International Fee Group Index and are according to country of residence. All DONA International fees are listed and payable in U.S. funds only. **To determine the current fee, check the International Fee Group Index on the web site at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org), e-mail [info@DONA.org](mailto:info@DONA.org) or call (888) 788-DONA (3662).** You may also pay for your application fee on-line at the DONA Boutique, [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org). Be sure to make a copy of your e-mail receipt from the Boutique and include it in your application materials.

### III. Read five books from the DONA Reading List and the DONA International Birth Doula Position Paper.

Included in this packet is a copy of the Required Reading List and Statement of Completion form. Please review them. A minimum of five books must be selected for certification purposes, in addition to the *DONA International Position Paper: The Birth Doula's Contribution to Modern Maternity Care*. The Position Paper is in your membership packet and available on the DONA International web site at [http://www.dona.org/publications/position\\_paper\\_birth.php](http://www.dona.org/publications/position_paper_birth.php). The Statement of Completion form must be completed and submitted with your application for DONA International certification.

### IV. Complete the Basic Knowledge Self Assessment Tool

### V. Complete ONE of the following:

#### A. Training in childbirth education or midwifery

A copy of your certificate or a letter verifying your training must accompany your application for DONA International certification. Recognized childbirth trainer organizations include but are not limited to the International Childbirth Education Association, Lamaze International, American Academy of Husband Coached Childbirth and Birth Works. Local organizations that train childbirth educators may be accepted provided that a letter or certificate briefly outlining the course work that the childbirth educator has mastered is included with this application. HypnoBirthing does not qualify.

#### B. Work experience in labor and delivery as a licensed practical or registered nurse

A letter of reference on hospital letterhead stationery verifying your work experience must accompany your application for DONA International certification.

#### C. Observation of a childbirth preparation series (not as an expectant parent)

The childbirth preparation series should consist of no less than 12 hours of class instruction. Please complete the Childbirth Class Observation Form in its entirety. If the only classes offered in your area are less than 12 hours, you may fulfill the 12-hour requirement by:

- a) Taking an additional course taught by another instructor
- OR
- b) Taking a VBAC and/or refresher course to make up the hours

The childbirth education component for option "C" must be taught by an educator certified through Lamaze, Bradley, Birth Works, ICEA, ACBE, Hypnobabies, CBI or ALACE. Exceptions may be made for candidates who do not have any of the above-certified educators within 30 miles. HypnoBirthing does not qualify.

The "Introduction to Childbirth" class offered in conjunction with DONA approved birth doula workshops is also sufficient to meet this requirement, as long as it is seven hours in length and taught by a DONA approved doula trainer.

**VI. Verification of breastfeeding requirement. Submit required documentation with completed certification application. Choose one (1):**

- Proof of completion of lactation consultant, breastfeeding peer counselor or community breastfeeding educator training.
- Proof of completion of an on-line lactation study program. One option is [http://www.leron-line.com/Basic\\_Lactation\\_Management.htm](http://www.leron-line.com/Basic_Lactation_Management.htm).
- Proof of participation in a breastfeeding class/workshop (three hour minimum). Attach appropriate form (included).

**VII. Attend a DONA approved birth doula workshop of 16 or more hours which includes, but is not limited to, the following\*\*:**

- The emotional and psychological processes of labor and birth
- The anatomy and physiology of reproduction, labor and birth
- Comfort measures and non-pharmacological pain management and labor enhancement
- Appropriate topics for prenatal and postpartum discussion with clients
- Specific suggestions for psychological and emotional support of the woman and her partner(s)
- Women's experiences of cesarean birth and the doula's role
- The doula's role with the newborn and the initiation of breastfeeding
- Referral sources for client needs beyond the scope of the doula
- Communication skills and values clarification
- Discussion of ethics and standards of practice for the doula

\*\*A copy of your certificate of attendance/completion of a DONA approved birth doula workshop must accompany your application for DONA International certification. If you are not certain that the workshop you have attended has the approval of DONA International for certification purposes, please contact the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662). You may also e-mail [Education@DONA.org](mailto:Education@DONA.org).

You must complete certification within four years of attendance at a DONA approved birth doula workshop. This is regardless of the expiration date on this Certification Application Packet.

**VIII. Copies of good evaluations from:**

- At least three clients (mothers) to whom you have provided labor support
- Three primary care providers (physician or midwife)
- For each physician's evaluation, a nurse's evaluation must also be submitted. For certification purposes, midwives may be counted as nurses. It is our hope that this will aid some doulas seeking certification.

All evaluation forms are provided within this packet. They may be duplicated.

You are responsible for having the correct number of good evaluations in your application for DONA International certification. Please do not have evaluations sent to DONA International by parents, family members or care providers. Hold all paperwork until you are ready to send in the completed packet.

Evaluations must be done after attending a DONA approved birth doula workshop and purchasing a birth certification packet.

The evaluations DO NOT need to be from the same births for which you submit Birth Record Sheets. You may have evaluations from births that are different from the births for which you submit Birth Record Sheets.

It is preferred, but not essential, that different care providers complete evaluations.

**IX. Copies of documentation from at least three births**

DONA International Birth Record Sheets are provided within this binder. These sheets are to be **fully** completed and returned with your completed packet. They may be duplicated by the doula. Often times, doulas find that they must do more than three births before meeting the requirements for certification.

Each Birth Record must include a 500-700 word essay. The essay is not to exceed two typewritten pages, with 12-point font and normal margins. The essay must include each of the following:

- a. Brief description of labor
- b. Your role as the doula
- c. Description of the mother's emotional reaction to labor, birth and early postpartum
- d. What you learned from this experience

A paragraph on each above point is sufficient. There is a sample essay included in this packet. The essay must be completed and returned with your application for DONA International certification. If possible, please type your essay and attach it to the Birth Record Sheets. Letters written to the mother or the child will not be accepted for certification purposes.

The "Client Confidentiality Release Form" is provided within this packet in front of the Birth Record Sheets. It is essential that the doula obtain a signature from her client so that the confidential information contained in the Birth Record may be reviewed for certification purposes. ***Birth Record Sheets without a release signature cannot be accepted for certification.***

**Criteria for Experiential Training:**

- The births that you submit must occur after attending a DONA approved birth doula workshop.
- Beginning January 1, 2003 births submitted must occur AFTER purchasing a DONA International certification packet. Any birth done BEFORE January 1, 2003 does not need to meet this requirement.
- Labor support **must begin before or at the onset of the active phase of labor.** To clarify, for certification purposes active labor will be considered four centimeters.
- The doula submitting the birth must be the PRIMARY doula at the birth.
- For certification purposes, the three births combined must have the doula present for a minimum total of 15 hours.
- The doula that is applying for certification must submit births in which her presence was continuous.
- The doula **must** remain for the birth of the baby to provide immediate postpartum support.
- Every vaginal exam must be documented on the Birth Record Sheet's "Labor Progression Chart."
- Cesarean births may account for only one of the three required birth experiences. If an elective/scheduled cesarean birth is attended, you must document:
  - Prenatal contact
  - Your presence at the birth
  - Immediate postpartum support
  - Postpartum contact

**X. Develop and submit a resource list that must include at least 45 resources from at least 30 different categories. Please be sure to check all listings for accuracy.**

**XI. Written essay (500-1000 words) on The Purpose and Value of Labor Support**

All essays must be typed, double spaced, and returned with your application for DONA International certification. The Purpose and Value of Labor Support Essay should include:

- a. The benefits of labor support to the mother and her family
- b. The purpose behind providing labor support
- c. The doula's responsibilities
- d. The doula's role

The essay will not be accepted if the doula only addresses her personal reasons for becoming a doula. It may be helpful when writing the essay to imagine that you are writing to someone who has never heard of a doula. The DONA International Birth Doula Position Paper, Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics should be referenced when writing this essay. Please include the benefits of doula care, as shown by current research.

**XII. Signature on the DONA International (a) Code of Ethics and (b) Standards of Practice forms.**

Your signature on the forms testifies that you will abide by the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice as set forth by DONA International. Signed copies of each form should be returned with your application for certification. The remaining copies of each form are for your records and should not be mailed to DONA International.

**XIII. OPTIONAL: Typed, double-spaced essay on "Why I Became a Doula."**

**XIV. Please save a copy for your files of all the materials that you send to DONA International.**

- XV. Mail your completed application materials and Certification Processing Fee in U.S. funds (current fees are available on the web site at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org)) or enclose a copy of your receipt for payment of your fees on-line at the DONA Boutique, to:**

**DONA Certification Chair  
PO Box 626, Jasper, IN 47547**

**\*\*\*\*ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION\*\*\*\***

**Mailing completed certification materials:**

Please do NOT send your completed packet using a mail service that requires a signature from the DONA International Home Office.

If you send your packet via another carrier other than the mail system, you will need to use the street address of 811 Newton Street, Jasper, IN 47546.

You may wish to include a self addressed stamped postcard. We will return it to you to acknowledge the receipt of your application.

Do not include the binder your materials arrived in. Do not place materials in any other type of binder or folder for mailing.

If you have not heard from the Certification Committee after two months of having mailed your completed application, please contact the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or [Certification@DONA.org](mailto:Certification@DONA.org).

Please allow two months for processing your application.

**Problems with materials submitted for certification:**

Applicants will be telephoned or will receive written notice if there is a problem with any of the materials submitted. In some circumstances, applicants may be asked to write additional materials.

**Extensions:**

One extension of six months may be granted for a fee of \$10. Order an extension on the DONA Boutique at [www.DONA.org](http://www.DONA.org) or by contacting the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662).

**Denial of certification:**

Certification may be denied to applicants who do not complete all requirements. Adherence to DONA International's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice is expected of applicants. Applicants are expected to act in a polite and professional manner when working with the Certification Committee. Applicants who falsify information or do not act in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice may be denied certification. Application fees will not be refunded in these cases.

**Replacement fee:**

A \$15 fee will be charged for replacement of this Certification Application Packet.

**Forms in languages other than English:**

Forms in languages other than English may be available. Please contact the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or e-mail [Certification@DONA.org](mailto:Certification@DONA.org). For review of completed certification packets written in languages other than English, please contact the DONA International Home Office.

**Oral Interviews:**

In special circumstances, for those applicants who are unable to write, an oral interview may be used for certification. You must contact the Certification Committee to make arrangements. Please call the Home Office at (888) 788-DONA (3662) or e-mail [Certification@DONA.org](mailto:Certification@DONA.org).

# SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR BIRTH ESSAYS

## I. **Paragraph One:** *Brief* Description of Labor

Sally called me at approximately 4 am on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Her contractions were about 7 minutes apart lasting 45 seconds. She decided that she was fine and would call back when she needed me, or in a few hours. At 7 am, Sally called and said she would like to go the hospital and asked me to meet them there. I arrived at 7:30. By 10 am, she was feeling her contractions mainly in her back, but seemed to be coping well. At 11:30, Sally's physician offered an epidural. Sally chose not to utilize an epidural at this point in her labor, but wanted to keep her options for pain control open. We tried a variety of coping techniques throughout the rest of the afternoon. At 5:25 pm, Sally was completely dilated and began to push. At 7:13 pm, a baby boy was born. The baby was placed directly on Sally's chest and began to nurse heartily within 30 minutes.

## II. **Paragraph Two:** Your Role as the Doula

My role at this birth was to help Sally's husband with a variety of suggestions. I taught him to do counter pressure and the double hip squeeze. We would often switch off, as it was tiring. I also suggested different coping techniques and position changes such as the shower, hands and knees, walking and the birth ball. Sally really enjoyed the shower and she used it many times. Since Sally had wanted to avoid pain medications, my role was to remind her of that and encourage her that she was doing well. When the physician offered the epidural, I reminded Sally and Bob that they could take a few minutes to think about it. Sally and Bob worked very well together, so I often found that my role was more of guidance than performance.

## III. **Paragraph Three:** Mother's Reaction to Labor and Birth

When I initially arrived at the hospital, Sally was focusing during contractions, but still chatty and excited between. As her contractions intensified and moved into her back, she was a bit surprised. I think it helped her when I talked a bit about the cause of back labor. She later stated that it really caught her off guard. After beginning counter pressure, Sally resumed a nice ritual in her labor. She was internally focused, but I believe, coping well. We hit another bump in the road as she approached transition. She was feeling panicked as she began to have an urge to push with her contractions. I think that it helped to have Bob get "eye to eye" and help her keep her breathing regular. She pushed like a pro and kept an upbeat attitude the entire time. Overall, Sally was thrilled at the way the birth went. She was quite pleased that she was able to avoid using pain medications. At our prenatal, she was concerned that she would not be able to "make it" without pain meds. At the postpartum visit, Bob stated that he was glad that I was there. He joked that there was no way he would have remembered everything that he had learned in childbirth class and that it was a "godsend" that there was someone there to remind him! Sally did mention that she felt that she could have used more help from both the nurse and me about getting the baby latched on. Overall, I think that Sally is happy with how the birth went and proud of herself and how she handled it.

## IV. **Paragraph Four:** What You Learned as the Doula

I think the biggest thing that I learned was that counter pressure works really well! I had not had a client with back labor before and had not tried counter pressure yet. It was amazing to see how much Sally needed it with every contraction! I also learned that my role at each birth was going to be different. I really took more of a "back seat" at this labor than at any other that I ever attended. I learned that to be an effective doula, I do not have to be the woman's sole supporter. I learned that I could be present to *facilitate* others helping her. Another thing I saw was that it really can help to remind the couple that "taking a few minutes" to make a decision can give them the emotional space to make the best decision for them. I also realize that I need to get more breastfeeding education under my belt so I can better help my clients!

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Your essays do not have to follow the above format. They do, however; have to include the four elements listed above:

- ✓ Brief description of labor
- ✓ Your role as the doula
- ✓ Mother's reaction to the birth
- ✓ What you learned

The above layout is simply a suggested method of formatting your essays.