



May 12th, 2020

Statement by The Doula Collective of Newfoundland and Labrador regarding COVID-19.

The Doula Collective of Newfoundland and Labrador (DCNL) is a member-run organization that represents doulas across our province. Doulas are professionally trained to provide non-clinical care and support to families throughout the perinatal period. As outlined by our unified Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, the DCNL membership is committed to providing client-centered care in collaboration with medical professionals.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions to the lives of citizens, and continues to threaten public health and well-being. DCNL recognizes that hospitals and regional health authorities have had to enforce policies to protect families and prevent the spread of COVID-19. We would like to express appreciation for those front-line workers providing care during these challenging times, and thank the nurses and other healthcare professionals who have assisted us in providing virtual support to birthing people when it was not possible to attend births in person.

DCNL is aware of the increased isolation and anxiety faced by many people birthing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we recognize the vital role physical distancing plays in preventing the spread of COVID-19, we also recognize the importance of continuous support from a familiar support person throughout the birthing process. Doula support has been proven to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes. Doulas are privately hired by expectant parents seeking additional support. Prior to labour and birth, doulas build relationships with their clients, and contribute significantly to their clients' birth preparation and support throughout labour, birth, and the postpartum period.

A joint statement released by The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, The College of Family Physicians of Canada, Canadian Association of Midwives, National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, and Canadian Association of Women's Health Nurses highlights the essential nature of the presence of support people throughout labour and birth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourage hospitals to make exceptions to visitor policies in cases that will impact patients' emotional well-being and care. Moreover, The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses and The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists both recognize doulas as essential personnel and as an integral part of the maternity care team. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many hospitals in the province shared this view and doulas were exempt from visitor restrictions.

As provincial public health measures begin to relax and we move to Alert Level 4, we strongly encourage regional health authorities across the province to seek innovative solutions to balance COVID-19 infection prevention and the physical, mental, and emotional health and wellness of families. Safety measures developed collaboratively by doulas and health authorities in other jurisdictions include limiting each doula to service provision in a single setting, providing or requiring appropriate personal protective equipment, and screening for symptoms and exposure to COVID-19 upon entry to healthcare facilities.

With appropriate safety measures in place, birthing parents should have the choice to include in-person doula support in their care plan. DCNL looks forward to working together with policy makers, healthcare providers, and families to create a perinatal care system where all families feel safe, supported, and empowered throughout pregnancy, labour, birth, and beyond.

For inquiries or further discussion, please email doula.collective.nl@gmail.com.