The Doula’s Role

Checklist

A “full-service” doula should be knowledgeable about the following:

Prenatal Period and Prevention
• Stages of pregnancy and reproduction in general
• Physical, hormonal and gestational changes that occur
• Range of normal emotional, psychological, and interpersonal changes
• Nutritional and medical needs and how to create an individualized pregnancy/birth plan
• How to address common worries and misconceptions of pregnant woman and family
• Risks and benefits of genetic testing

The Labor and Birth Process
• How to effectively work with “birth team”: ob-gyn, midwife, nurse, partner, and family, etc.
• Pain management options (pros, cons, and limitations of medical and alternative methods)
• Risk factors and protocols for OB complications
• Interventions: Research on reasons to avoid induction, c-section, and episiotomy, if possible

Immediate and Early Postpartum Period
• Breastfeeding benefits and methods to overcome possible difficulties with nursing
• Ways to enhance early bonding and attachment (including “the early experience”, rooming-in, etc.)
• Early infant development: stages, behavioral markers, range of differences in temperature, rhythms, etc.
• Ways to enhance healthy parent-infant interactions and attunement
• Warning signs for mother and baby during early postpartum:
  How to observe and assess problems that require appropriate referrals

General Support
• Organizational skills (how to create plans for birth, postpartum care, household management)
• Communication and listening skills
• Relaxation and stress management tools, including gentle touch and bodywork
• Various emotional processing techniques and when appropriate to use:
  e.g. active listening, role-playing, hypnosis, storytelling, imagery, EMDR, etc.
• Training to effectively respond to emotional crises and unexpected “eruptions”

Referrals and Resources
• Programs: lactation training, natural birth preparation, birth centers, support groups, parenting training
• Recommendations for books, web sites, and videos (i.e. the Mother’s Brazelton)