



EFFECTIVE DATE: 01 | 01 | 2022

POLICY LAST UPDATED: 11 | 02 | 2021

OVERVIEW

A doula is a paraprofessional who provides advice, information, emotional support, guidance, and physical comfort to pregnant women and their families before, during, and after childbirth.

This policy applies to Commercial Products only. This policy does not apply to Medicare Advantage Plans, as doula services are not covered for Medicare Advantage members.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

Commercial Products

Doula services are covered for Commercial members. If services are provided within the state of Rhode Island, members should access a doula who is contracted with BCBSRI. Members seeking doula services outside the state of Rhode Island can request reimbursement of those services by submitting documentation of the services received following BCBSRI's process related to member submitted claims for doula services.

Provider Qualifications*

Doulas must:

- Be certified by the Rhode Island Certification Board (RICB) to be recognized for reimbursement, and;
- Attest to being trained in all doula core competency requirements as follows; and as applicable to the specific services provided as outlined by the RICB:
 - An education that includes any combination of childbirth education, birth doula training, antepartum doula training, and postpartum doula training;
 - Attendance as a minimum of one breastfeeding class or holding a valid lactation certification;
 - Attendance as a minimum of one childbirth class or valid childbirth education certification;
 - Completion of cultural competency training;
 - Completion of HIPAA/client confidentiality training;
 - Completion of CPR certification for children and adults; and
 - Completion of SafeServ certification for meal preparation.

* These Provider Qualifications are subject to change and/or waiver at the sole discretion of BCBSRI.

Doula services are covered as follows per each pregnancy:

- Prenatal and Postnatal visits (up to the first 12 months postpartum) – up to 6 visits total* (typically 3 prenatal and 3 postnatal)
- Labor and delivery – 1 encounter/unit of billing

- 1 encounter/unit of billing for Labor and Delivery services is covered regardless of the duration/hours of the birthing process.
 - If more than one doula provides services for Labor and Delivery, the doula who provided the services at the initiation at Labor and Delivery shall be the billing provider for Labor and Delivery services e.g. 1 unit of billing. The second doula that provides services shall not file a claim, nor be reimbursed for their services by BCBSRI. It is expected that the initial doula that attends the Labor and Delivery and who submits a claim will coordinate with the second doula in terms of their reimbursement for their portion of the delivery for which they provided services.

Note: If a member's pregnancy does not result in a live birth, or if the member did not receive 3 prenatal visits, the allotted benefit remaining from the prenatal visits and labor and delivery can be used toward postpartum visits and/or bereavement support.

*See Coding section for definition and limitations of a visit.

Note: Duplicate services rendered by both a doula and any other provider will not be reimbursed.

Providers Credentialed with BCBSRI as both Doula and Lactation Consultant

If a provider holds certifications as both a Doula and a Lactation Consultant:

- They may not bill for both doula services and lactation consulting services on the same date of service.
- If lactation consultation services are provided by a Doula who has established a doula-patient relationship with a member, all services including, but not limited to, lactation consultation services, must be billed under the Doula provider specialty and according to the coding and reimbursement guidelines outlined in this Policy.
- A Doula can bill separately for lactation consultation services using the members lactation consultation benefits once the member has exhausted their doula services/the members doula visits have been exhausted.

COVERAGE

Doula services are available through BCBSRI for Commercial members only. ***There is no member cost share for doula services as they are offered through a Care Management Program.*** This includes but is not limited to; all deductibles (both HSA compatible and non-HSA compatible deductible plans) as well as any coinsurance and/or copayments that a member may have under their plan.

For self-funded employer groups, doula services will be effective beginning upon the group's 2022 renewal, as elected by the employer group. Please note that self-funded employer groups/benefit plans may elect to exclude doula services or elect to include doula services at an alternative effective date.

BACKGROUND

A doula is a person who provides emotional and physical support during pregnancy, childbirth and after delivery. A certified doula has taken a training program and passed an exam in how to assist pregnant women and their families prior to, during and after pregnancy.

Doulas can perform different roles, depending on the needs of the mother:

- Support women who are put on bed rest to prevent preterm labor.
 - They help with household tasks and childcare.
- Provide continuous care during labor.
- Support the new mom during the first few weeks after birth.
 - They help with care and feeding of the baby and household tasks.

Before childbirth, a doula will typically meet with the expectant mother during the second or third trimester to get acquainted and answer questions about the birthing process, as well as help the mother understand labor and delivery procedures and possible complications. They may also teach relaxation and breathing skills and help develop a birth plan, etc.

A doula may be present throughout the labor process, continuously providing comfort and support, helping to communicate with the medical staff and the mother. They will generally also offer pain-relief techniques, such as breathing techniques, relaxation techniques, massage, and laboring positions.

After delivery, a doula can provide support and encouragement to the parents after bringing your baby home, teach the parents how to care for a new baby, support the father and any siblings and teach them how to help the mother. Doulas may also assist with breastfeeding education.

Numerous studies have documented the benefits of having a doula present during labor. A recent Cochrane Review, *Continuous Support for Women During Childbirth*, showed a very high number of positive birth outcomes when a doula was present. With their support, women were less likely to have pain-relief medications administered and less likely to have a cesarean birth. Women also reported having a more positive childbirth experience.

Other studies have shown that having a doula as a member of the birth team decreases the overall cesarean rate by 50%, the length of labor by 25%, the use of oxytocin by 40%, and requests for an epidural by 60%. Doulas often use the power of touch and massage to reduce stress and anxiety during labor.

While labor and delivery of a live birth is the hopeful outcome, not all expectant mothers deliver a live birth. The postpartum period up to 12 months is the most critical time for a new mother whether a live birth occurs or not. Doula services pose an effective interdisciplinary solution for families during this timeframe. If a member's pregnancy does not result in a live birth, the allotted Care Management benefit amount remaining from prenatal and Labor and Delivery services can be used toward postpartum and/or bereavement supports.

The following Rhode Island General Law, 27-20-73, addresses insurance coverage of perinatal doula services:

Note: BCBSRI is electing to implement Doula Services effective January 1, 2021.

27-20-73. Perinatal doulas.

(a) As used in this section, "doula" or "perinatal doula" means a trained professional providing continuous physical, emotional, and informational support to a pregnant individual, from antepartum, intrapartum, and up to the first twelve (12) months of the postpartum period. Doulas also provide assistance by referring childbearing individuals to community-based organizations and certified and licensed perinatal professionals in multiple disciplines.

(b) Every individual or group health insurance contract, or every individual or group hospital or medical expense insurance policy, plan, or group policy delivered, issued for delivery, or renewed in this state on or after July 1, 2022, shall provide coverage for the services of perinatal doulas in accordance with each health insurers' respective principles and mechanisms of reimbursement, credentialing, and contracting, if the services are within the perinatal doulas' area of professional competence as defined by the doula certification standard developed and maintained by the Rhode Island certification board in collaboration with the department of health, and are currently reimbursed when rendered by any other health care provider. No insurer or hospital or medical service corporation may require supervision, signature, or referral by any other health care provider as a condition of reimbursement, except when those requirements are also applicable to other categories of health care providers. No insurer or hospital or medical service corporation or patient may be required to pay for duplicate services actually rendered by both a perinatal doula and any other health care provider.

CODING

Commercial Products

There is no specific CPT code representative of doula maternity services. As a result, the following HCPCS code and modifiers should be used by participating perinatal doula providers:

S9445 Patient education, not otherwise classified, non-physician provider, individual, per session
**A doula visit is considered a visit of at least 60 minutes. Providers shall only bill one (1) unit of service per each date of service, on which doula services are provided. Providers should not report or submit claims for services that are less than 60 minutes. There may be supplemental communications via phone, text or other communication means outside of a primary doula visit e.g. the typical 3 pre and postnatal visits, however those services are not recognized for separate reimbursement and/or the billing of claims. Contracted doulas with BCBSRI shall not bill BCBSRI members for these services. The payment for face-to-face services is considered inclusive of reimbursement for any supplemental communications/ services.*

Modifiers

Use Modifier FP for prenatal services:

FP Service provided as part of family planning program

Use Modifier XU for attendance at the delivery:

XU Unusual nonoverlapping service, the use of a service that is distinct because it does not overlap usual components of the main service

Use Modifier TH for postnatal services:

TH Obstetrical treatment/services, prenatal or postpartum

Note: BCBSRI requires ALL claims to be submitted with the Modifiers above e.g. FP, XU, TH in the first or primary modifier field on all claims.

Use Modifier 95 for audio-visual telemedicine services in the secondary modifier field on all claims.

95 Synchronous telemedicine service rendered via a real-time interactive audio and video telecommunications system

IF the above coding is not followed, BCBSRI will not be able to identify the services as Doula services and the claim will not adjudicate under the correct benefit:

Place of Service

BCBSRI allows for prenatal and postnatal visits via telemedicine e.g. conducted via **telephone only** as well as **audio-visual telemedicine** visits.

All telemedicine services, regardless if performed via telephone only or audio-visual, must be billed with the following Place of Service:

02 Telehealth

All other services should use an appropriate place of service code e.g. 12-Home, 11-Office, 22-Outpatient Hospital, etc.

RELATED POLICIES

Lactation Consultations

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, December 2021

REFERENCES

1. [What Is a Doula? \(webmd.com\)](http://webmd.com)
2. [Having a Doula - What are the Benefits? | American Pregnancy Association](http://AmericanPregnancyAssociation.org)

3. 6/29/2021 Public Notice Of Proposed Amendment To Rhode Island Medicaid State Plan, State Of Rhode Island Executive Office Of Health And Human Services
4. State of Rhode Island In General Assembly January Session, A.D. 2021. 2021 -- H 5929 Substitute A

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