



**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 01|01|2022  
**POLICY LAST UPDATED:** 12|20|2021

## OVERVIEW

A doula is a paraprofessional who provides advice, information, emotional support, guidance, and physical comfort, etc. to pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. before, during, and after pregnancy.

*This policy applies to BCBSRI Commercial Products only. This policy does not apply to FEP members or Medicare Advantage Plans, as doula services are not covered for Medicare Advantage members or for members of Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield Plans nationally e.g., BlueCard members.*

## MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

## PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

## POLICY STATEMENT

### Commercial Products

Doula services are covered for BCBSRI Commercial members.

As of the effective date of this policy, BCBSRI does not have a network of doulas. As a result, members receiving doula services within or outside the state of Rhode Island can request reimbursement of doula services by submitting documentation of the services received following BCBSRI's process related to member submitted claims/invoice from the rendering doula. As an alternative, a doula or a member may also submit a claim e.g., a CMS-1500 claim form to BCBSRI if such claim form is provided to the member by the doula or submitted directly to BCBSRI by the doula.

A member submitted invoice/documentation and/or a claim should clearly outline the services provided by the doula (see coding/services below), the date of such services, the number of visits/hours if multiple visits are made on the same day/date of service, the doula's full name, NPI number, social security number or Tax ID number (if payment is to be made to the doula), and all member information e.g., full name, address, member ID number, date of birth, so that BCBSRI has adequate information to process the documentation/invoice/claim. This form can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

BCBSRI expects to have formal credentialing/network participation requirements established on or before July 1, 2022, e.g., certification by the Rhode Island Certification Board (RICB) along with other standard documentation that is part of BCBSRI's standard credentialing process. At such time, BCBSRI will document its requirements in this Policy and begin to develop a network of participating doula providers.

Doula services are covered as follows per each pregnancy.

Note: Doula services can be self-initiated by a member through self-screening e.g., a positive pregnancy test at home or through a healthcare provider referral:

- \*Prenatal and Postnatal visits (up to the first 12 months postpartum) – up to 6 visits total
  - \* (typically, 3 prenatal and 3 postnatal visits)

- 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 or for support whenever & however the pregnancy ends.
  - 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, the labor and delivery code/allowance as well as any unused prenatal visit(s) allowances may be allotted to/for other pregnancy related, postpartum, and/or bereavement support services the member requires.

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

## 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 BCBSRI 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. Check benefits for each member seeking to obtain doula services. Please note this Policy is only applicable to BCBSRI Commercial members, members who receive their healthcare coverage through BCBSRI. It does not apply to members of Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield Plans nationally/BlueCard members. Doula's looking to provide services to non-BCBSRI members /BlueCard members e.g., Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts or Connecticut members, should identify if those members have doula benefits, how they can access those benefits and the process used by the members Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield Plan regarding the process for reimbursement. Benefit coverage, coding, other restrictions, and limitations for doula services may vary between Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield Plans or by individual employer group.***

## BACKGROUND

A doula is a person who provides emotional and physical and other support during pregnancy, childbirth and after delivery/or at the end of pregnancy. A certified doula has taken a training program(s) in how to assist pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc., prior to, during and after pregnancy.

Doulas can perform different roles, depending on the needs of the pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc., :

- Support pregnant persons who are put on bed rest to prevent preterm labor.
  - They help with household tasks and support with sibling adjustment.
- Provide continuous care during labor.
- Support the pregnant persons, child, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. 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 pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. during the second or third trimester to get acquainted and answer questions about the birthing process, as well as help the pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc., 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 pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. They will generally also offer pain-relief techniques, such as breathing techniques, relaxation techniques, massage, and laboring positions.

After pregnancy, a doula can provide support and encouragement to the pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. after bringing a baby home, teach the pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. how to care for a new baby, support the pregnant persons, birth parent(s), partner(s), family, etc. and teach them how to help the pregnant persons. Doulas may also assist with breastfeeding education, etc.

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 pregnant persons deliver a live birth. The postpartum period up to 12 months is the most critical time for a new pregnant person 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, 2022.*

**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**

## REFERENCES

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