

# Questions to advance future research on community doula care

Given research showing numerous benefits to doula support, policymakers increasingly view doula care as a strategy to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. However, research on the impact of *community doula care*, or community-based doula care, is limited.



Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California, San Francisco partnered with community doula leaders on a project designed to facilitate equitable and ethical research on community doula care in California. In 2021, using a structured, collaborative research prioritization process, the project Steering Committee generated more than 170 questions about community doula care that are important to answer through research.\*

The goal of generating these questions was to establish a starting point for researchers, doulas, and clients to develop thoughtful studies that may fill important gaps in the literature. Here are the Steering Committee's priority questions, organized under **10 themes**:



**Click here to read more about what makes community doula care special.**

## Scope of community doula care

- What is the difference between the scope of work of a community vs traditional doula?
- What are the core competencies that every doula should have?

## Awareness of doula care

- How do we educate clinicians and health systems about doula care?

## Doula trainings and certification

- How are most community doulas trained and by whom?
- Do doulas need continuing education courses? If so, on which topics and how often do they need to take the courses?

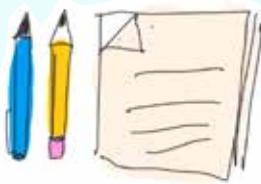
## Workforce development

- How do we envision and reimagine the birthing workforce that people want, desire, and deserve?
- How can we give doulas the professional development they need (e.g. financial literacy, capacity building, ins and outs of operating a business, referrals, and consultations)?
- How do we provide pathways to birth work, including opportunities for youth?

## Ethics

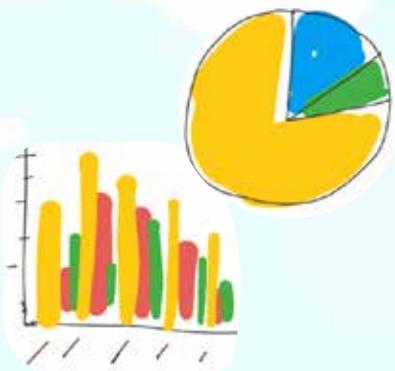
- What do equitable/fair/just labor conditions look like for community doulas? ➤

## Compensation and funding



- What is the range of compensation for community doula care?
- What are appropriate rates for Medi-Cal reimbursement for doulas?
- How can we redesign the social safety net and have doulas be a central part of it?
- Does funding for community doula programs include the true cost of programming (e.g. legal counsel, insurance for the organizations and the doulas, marketing, evaluation, and administrative support needed to run the programs)?
- What are the different funding models for community doula organizations?
- How do we establish reimbursement models that support doula work as a profession and not a side job?

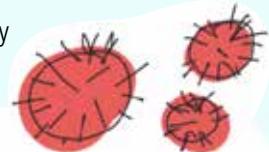
## Metrics, outcomes, and mechanisms



- What are the metrics we should use to understand the impact/efficacy of community doula care?

## COVID-19

- What did we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic regarding community doula care that we can leverage to make it more sustainable?



## Policy and standardization



- How will government involvement (Medi-Cal reimbursement) impact the community doula space?
- How can we build trust and foster respectful conversations with doulas who are resistant to regulations?

## Integration and interactions with health systems

- How can doulas and clinical teams have mutually respectful relationships that support clients?
- How can health insurance companies contract with doulas in a human-centered and collaborative way that works in the long run?

*These questions have been edited for clarity. Click here to see the full list of questions generated during our research prioritization process.*

*\* The Research Prioritization by Affected Communities (RPAC) protocol is meant to facilitate patient and public involvement in research agenda setting. We adapted the RPAC protocol to guide the research prioritization process among our Steering Committee.*

## About the Community Doula Research Project

The Steering Committee for the Community Doula Research Project centers the voices of people of color and consists of community doulas, former doula clients, clinicians, payers, advocates, researchers, and public health professionals who live and work in California, where the project is based.

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