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MDHHS sees promising expansion for doula care access

Michigan is a leader in ensuring access to doulas for Medicaid beneficiaries

LANSING, Mich. – As part of its commitment to improving birth outcomes and maternal health, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) now has more than 1,000 doulas on the MDHHS Doula Registry – doubling the state’s goal of 500 registered doulas by 2028.

More than 700 of these doulas have become Medicaid-enrolled providers, ensuring families in every Michigan county have access to at least one doula serving Medicaid-eligible families. This milestone, accomplished in September, surpasses the target set in the [2024 Advancing Healthy Births Plan](#), which aimed for 500 registered doulas by 2028.

“Michigan’s investment in doulas is transforming maternal health outcomes across the state,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “When families have access to trusted birth support, we see healthier parents, healthier babies and stronger communities. Surpassing this goal so quickly shows the deep commitment of our doulas and the value of this initiative.”

A doula is a trained birth professional who helps families have safe, healthy and positive birth experiences. Doulas provide non-clinical emotional, physical and informational support to pregnant women and their families before, during and after birth.

“From the beginning, MDHHS and the Doula Initiative team made it a priority to involve doulas in shaping the details of Medicaid coverage,” said Jessica English, a member of the Doula Advisory Council, a birth doula trainer and the owner of Birth Kalamazoo.

“They have taken insights from experienced doulas around the state seriously, implementing systems that support doulas while we are in turn supporting families. With that collaborative approach, in less than three years Michigan has become a national leader in Medicaid coverage for doula services. We are grateful to be in partnership to continue improving maternal health outcomes.”

[Evidence](#) has [shown](#) that doula-assisted childbirths are:

- Four times less likely to have a baby with low birth weight.
- Two times less likely to experience a complication involving the mother or baby.
- Significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding when possible.

In January 2023, Medicaid coverage of doula services was [established](#) in Michigan and then [expanded](#) in October 2024. MDHHS launched the Doula Initiative to support a broader statewide goal of reducing infant and maternal mortality by:

- Expanding the doula network and promoting access to doula care.
- Providing technical assistance and support for Medicaid doula providers, partners and families.
- Facilitating the [Michigan Doula Advisory Council](#) to inform the advancement of doula services.
- Managing the [MDHHS Doula Registry](#), a platform for families to find doula care in their area.

The success of the expansion of doula services is due in part to the efforts of the Michigan Doula Advisory Council, which continues to engage with the Doula Initiative to shape Michigan into a sustainable and supportive environment for doula care.

"Doulas are absolutely vital to improving birth outcomes. We provide emotional, educational and physical support, but we also advocate for families — making sure their voices are heard and their choices are respected," said Erika Millender, a full spectrum doula, childbirth educator and owner of Doula Do. "Additionally, when we intentionally focus on improving outcomes of Black and Indigenous families who have disproportionately higher rates of perinatal mortality and morbidity, we create a wave of safety and dignity that genuinely improves the experience for everyone."

For more information, please visit [Doula Initiative](#) website or contact MDHHS-MIDoula@michigan.gov.

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