

# A Doula's Fees

## Hours

Most first labors last longer than 18 hours; some can last as long as 40 or more. The average time a doula spends with a woman for her labor and birth is about 12 hours. Add to that at least another 6-8 hours in prenatal meetings and more if the client chooses to have the postpartum meetings. Phone calls, individual research and responding to e-mails often adds another hour or two per client.

## Clients

A doula limits the number of clients on the calendar to avoid birth conflicts and to ensure that we are reasonably rested when our client goes into labor. Most doulas try to schedule 4 clients per month. When a client's due date goes on the calendar, your doula commits to being available two weeks beforehand and two weeks after that date. This means that when a doula schedules a two-week vacation, they have to add another four weeks during which they cannot accept clients.

## Self-Employment Factor

The rule of thumb is that a self-employed professional's income is only half of what they earn, after deductions for vacation and sick time, self-employment taxes, health insurance, and business expenses. Communication expenses are high for a doula. Many doulas have multiple phones, a web site, and a computer with a high-speed Internet connection. They also have routine professional and office expenses as well as transportation and supplies expenses. In addition, there are supplies your doula will bring to your birth and/or give you at appointments and interviews. Bookkeeping, advertising, cell phone service, office supplies, travel expenses, liability insurance, membership fees, self-employment taxes, labor support tools and continuing education are all a part of being self-employed.

## Training and Experience

It's important for your doula to keep up with all of the most current information. In order to attend conferences and training opportunities, they have to limit the number of clients they can accept around the time they will be unavailable, thereby reducing the total number of clients they can work with each year (see [Clients](#) section above).

## Intangibles

Being on-call all the time requires a very high level of personal sacrifice, including a willingness to be awakened after half an hour of sleep to go attend a labor for the next 40 hours. Personal family events are frequently missed or interrupted for births. When they go to a movie with a friend, they have to take two cars, in case they have to leave suddenly for a birth. If they attend a party, they have to forgo that glass of wine and they have to bring a change of clothes wherever they go.