

Philadelphia Alliance for Labor Support

“Helping to create positive birth experiences”

What is the Philadelphia Alliance for Labor Support (PALS)?

PALS is a not-for-profit community organization dedicated to helping Philadelphia women have positive birth experiences. Our doulas provide *free* labor support services including physical, emotional, and informational support. PALS is affiliated with DONA International and funded by the University of Pennsylvania Student Activities Council (SAC). PALS members include students from various Penn programs as well as community members.

What is A Doula?

A doula is an individual who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to pregnant women and their families. Doulas are not medically trained individuals. However, doula training includes a review of the phases of pregnancy and labor, possible complications of birth, and the role of potential medical interventions (Pitocin augmentation, electronic fetal monitoring, pharmacological agents, etc.). In addition, doulas learn special skills to help women relax and cope with pain including massage, relaxation/breathing techniques, and position changes.

What is Expected of PALS Members?

Volunteer organizations like PALS can only survive and provide services to the community through the commitment and energy of members. Active membership includes attendance at monthly meetings, volunteering for on-call shifts, dispatcher duty, or accepting prenatal clients (see below), and payment of annual dues (\$5).

What Are the Benefits of Becoming A PALS Member?

- (1) **Library:** Check out books from the extensive PALS library. The library contains books required for certification through DONA.
- (2) **Supplies:** Borrow birth bags including a birth ball, massage tools, massage oils, lotions, and compresses.
- (3) **Educational Materials:** Use free educational materials for prenatal meetings. Educational materials for prenatal visits on birth plans, positions for birth, breastfeeding, prenatal nutrition, perineal massage, and kegel exercises are available from the Equipment Manager.
- (4) **Network:** Meet other doulas and keep skills current through monthly PALS meetings. Monthly meetings are announced on the PALS website and are currently the first Sunday of the month at 3-5pm.
- (5) **DONA:** PALS has a group membership to DONA International. By joining through PALS, you will receive a discount off the individual membership fee.
- (6) **Births:** PALS helps members attend births!
- (7) **Refund:** Active members trained by PALS receive a \$50 refund off their training fee after 6 months of participation in PALS.

How Can I Attend Births?

PALS offers services to the community through two programs:

- (1) **On-Call Program:** The On-Call Program provides 24 hour on-call doula services to women delivering at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania or Pennsylvania Hospital. Doulas are on call for 12 hour shifts from 7pm to 7am and 7am to 7pm and are called in by HUP staff or Pennsy midwives for women who have not previously met with a PALS doula. New “orientee” doulas will have the opportunity to be matched with a “mentor” for their first on-call shifts. All doulas are advised to attend an orientation session, purchase a name-tag, and receive immunization clearance prior to volunteering.
- (2) **Prenatal Match-Up Program:** The Prenatal Match-up Program allows clients to meet with doulas in advance to discuss birth options and explore childbirth education needs. Doulas are on-call for the client’s birth and are welcome to check out a birth bag 2 weeks in advance of the client’s due date.