



**International Center for Traditional Childbearing (ICTC)**

## **Doula Philosophy and Community Impact**

The ICTC believes pregnancy and mothering and fathering are a special time, and should be a time of joy for all parents. ICTC recognizes that in many instances fear and stress surround pregnancy, birth and parenting, putting women at risk for premature labor, postpartum depression and other negative outcomes. Laboring women and their families deserve companionship and nurturing to help them feel supported, informed and empowered during the pregnancy, birth and parenting experience. The ICTC doula philosophy is built on public health and universal birth traditions, where women and other members of the community, deeply care for pregnant women and new mothers and families. The tradition is to care for the pregnant woman so that she will be healthy in every dimension to birth, nurse and raise her child. The tradition is full circle, with the nurturing and care of the new mother continuing to at least one year after the birth of her baby.

The ICTC doula philosophy is culturally sensitive, with comprehensive, quality care provided by doulas that speaks to their clients' cultural values, ensuring a healthy birth and parenting experience. The ICTC believes that doulas should have knowledge of proven, traditional birth practices, postpartum care rituals, the midwifery model of care, public health, community service, entrepreneurship, and referral and advocacy. The ICTC approach is that a doula should be able to provide both labor and postpartum services, and link the family to community resources when needed. Using the Full Circle Doula® (FCD) model, ICTC teaches a one stop approach to improve birth outcomes, provide holistic care, and encourage the normalcy of the perinatal period through wrap around services. The FCD® model emulates the 20th century African American midwife's birth traditions and public health practice of comprehensive perinatal care, which accesses the needs of the family with special attention given to engaging the father. The FCD® training includes the midwifery model of care, public health, birth practices, breastfeeding support and postpartum care and rituals. It establishes a strong client relationship to holistically educate, prevent prematurity, stop infant mortality, improve birth outcomes, increase breastfeeding rates, and reduce postpartum depression. It is one of the most holistic approaches to birth and parenting in the healthcare field, and one which insures healthier babies and mothers over the long term.

ICTC believes that every woman can learn to be a Full Circle Doula® to serve her community, nurturing mothers and serving as a birth companion, which is the ICTC's translation of the word doula (Doula is a Greek word for woman helper).

Women who train as Full Circle Doulas® become healthier, engage in community service, insure healthier babies and mothers, provide proactive care in ways that reduce the need for and use of social services; and FCD creates business opportunities for women that provide much needed, culturally competent – and trusted – healthcare for women of color right in the community. Full Circle Doula® women are leaders within their community and advocate for the families that they serve.

ICTC believes that every woman and her family deserves the full experience of having a Full Circle Doula®.

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