

# SISTERWEB COMMUNITY DOULAS

SEPTEMBER 2023

TIME AT BIRTHS AND BENEFITS OF A COHORT/MENTOR  
MODEL, FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 & 2022-2023



## BACKGROUND

Doulas are nonclinical birth workers who support people physically and emotionally before, during, and after birth.<sup>1</sup> Community doulas are from and for the communities they support, combining ancestral and cultural practices with evidence-based doula care, and often provide a diversity of linkage and referral relevant to their clients needs.<sup>2, 3</sup> This holistic approach to physical and emotional care before, during, and after birth amounts to more prenatal and postpartum appointments, spending more time with their clients when compared to private doulas.<sup>4-6</sup> The community doula care model has shown to reduce impacts of structural racism, address disparities in maternal health, and improve birth outcomes and experiences of care.<sup>7</sup> However, this model continues to lack sustainable and equitable public funding and acknowledgement as a skilled profession.<sup>7, 8</sup>

## OBJECTIVE

With the increase in pilot programs for insurance reimbursement for doula care and the integration of doula care as a health equity advancing intervention, it is essential to document and understand the scope of work of community doulas.<sup>2, 8-10</sup> In this infographic, we show the experiences of SisterWeb community doulas when supporting clients during labor and birth. We also show changes, if any, by comparing these data across two fiscal years.

## METHODS

Quantitative data for the 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 fiscal years is derived from SisterWeb's electronic case management software, Scorecard/Compyle.<sup>11</sup> Qualitative data was collected internally during the SisterWeb Doula Story Sharing Circle in March 2023. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed after removing personal health information (PHI).

## FINDINGS

*"She [supervisor] was trying to help me deal with my my feelings, telling me that I didn't prioritize my rest...she really made me feel like... Everything is my choice to make. It's not like I'm ever gonna be pressured into like having to go into a birth like or stay longer than I need to. You know, 'cause I really feel that guilt when I leave a client, but she really like supported me." - Kindred Birth Companion Doula, 2023*

*"She [mentor] just always really reminds us...this is heavy...you wanna make sure that you're doing good for this person, but you have to make sure that your cup is also full... I can't just keep going and going and pulling from empty that I have to be pour from the overflow to continue being productive and not feeling burn out." - Kindred Birth Companion Doula, 2023*

*"... I started to feel really like isolated in the work and really like frustrated with all the people like my family and my friends who didn't understand like what I was going through like the days after a birth would be so emotional... coming to SisterWeb and be able to work collectively and having doula circles having a cohort working as a team, has really, I think helped me grow professionally by teaching that this work is [not] to be done alone... I was just talking to like how much stronger we are when we work together." - Semilla Sagrada Doula, 2023*

## CHARACTERISTICS OF LABOR AND BIRTH, FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2021-2022 & 2022-2023

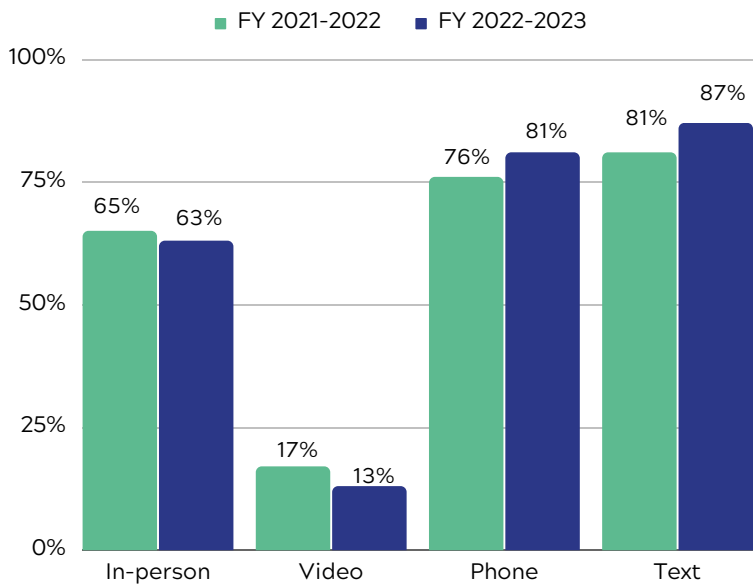
	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
Total births <sup>a</sup>	n= 60	n= 61
Average number of hours of support per birth (hours)	15.53	25.17
Birth type % (n)		
Vaginal	65% (50)	75% (46)
Cesarean	35% (27)	25% (15)
Induction % (n)	35% (29)	43% (27)
Client attempted to breastfeed % (n) <sup>b</sup>	75% (62) <sup>c</sup>	89% (56)

<sup>a</sup> Clients whose births were attended by their doulas.

<sup>b</sup> Client attempted to breastfeed at birth or in the immediate postpartum.

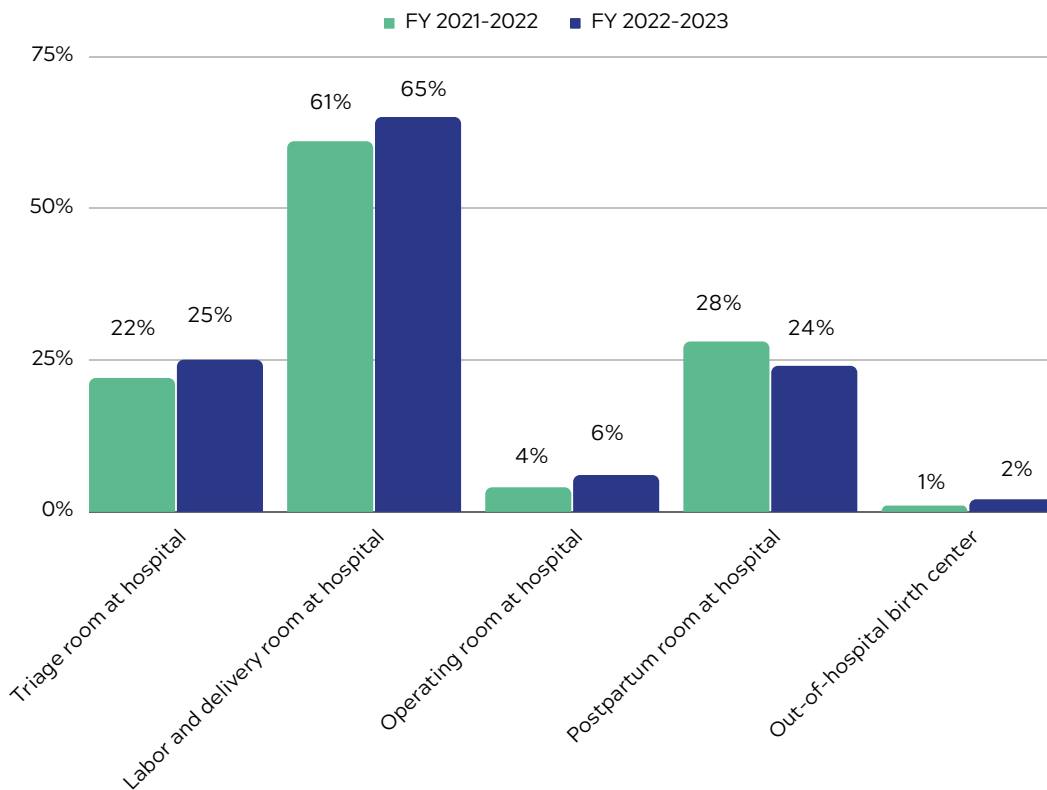
<sup>c</sup> Includes clients without births attended by a doula.

## COMMUNITY DOULA SUPPORT TYPE\*



\*Doulas support clients in multiple ways during labor and birth.

## WHERE DID THE COMMUNITY DOULA PROVIDE SUPPORT? \*



\*Doulas provide support in multiple locations during labor and birth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Community doula care should be recognized and acknowledged as a skilled profession with a justly compensated workforce.<sup>8</sup>
- Legislation is needed to support the growth of a robust community based doula workforce and provide sustainable federal funding.<sup>7</sup>
- Incorporating cohorts within the community doula model can promote teamwork, peer to peer support, shared learning, professional growth, and mentorship for doulas before, during, and after clients undergo labor and birth.
- Promoting time and space for community doula rest and self care after supporting clients through labor and birth within the community doula model is imperative for the wellbeing of community doulas, their clients, and the organization.
- Weekly mentorship and reflective space to hold and process unique experiences of community doulas during labor and birth.
- Doula organizations need to have enough general operating funding in order to document information such as time spent at births in order to document programmatic improvements.

## REFERENCES

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