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Insurance

Topic: Billing Hubs

Hello my name is Wendy Scharp. I began my doula practice in 2003 and have proudly been an Oregon doula since 2006. In 2013, I advanced my practice by becoming a Doula Trainer to help others get involved in the doula profession. In 2003 I earned a degree in Human Services and I have had the honor of serving pregnant and expectant families in a multitude of capacities. At the beginning of my career in Oregon, I worked as a house mother at Magdalene Home which is a home for pregnant teens. I also served as an on-call doula for Ashland Community Hospital. A few years later, I worked for the WIC program and taught childbirth classes at hospitals across the state. Most notably, I worked in the addictions field as a case manager for a program called Healthy Babies at OnTrack in Southern Oregon. This was the first place I was truly able to apply my passion to help struggling families with my love of supporting women's health.

During my tenure as case manager with the Healthy Babies program, we were able to establish doula care as an included element of the grant parameters we were operating under. Our mission was to support women in recovery during their pregnancy, births and postpartum and it was an immense honor and responsibility.

In 2011 my family relocated to Portland, Oregon where I continued growing my doula practice. In 2013, I opened my own Doula Agency and Billing Hub for Doulas and started training doulas through DONA International. Our goals as an agency are vast, but on the top of our priority list is easing the access to embarking upon a doula career and making it a viable and sustainable career option for doulas in Oregon. I currently have doulas contracted with my organization throughout Oregon and Washington. In 2023, we started billing Oregon Medicaid for doula services. In 2024, we served 201 self pay birthing families and 74 birthing families on Medicaid in Oregon. In addition to our direct service in the community, I also trained 122 new doulas seeking to become professionals!

As the doula profession grows, billing and the administrative workload are becoming more demanding and bringing about logistical challenges. Billing is complex and collecting payment from insurance can take months—up to 3-4 months sometimes. This delay presents a significant barrier for us as a small business. We're finding that this delay currently causes a fiscal deficit as we work diligently and tirelessly trying to set up billing systems and navigate all the complexities, all while striving to pay our doulas a liveable wage.

Also, as we experience an influx of new professional doulas and increased access to doula services for families, it has become apparent that Doula Billing hubs need more administrative support to create and maintain solid foundations. It is an exorbitant and unreasonable expectation for a single doula to exert the time and effort to bill numerous types of insurance on their own. In the Portland Metro area, there are at least 7 different insurance companies that a

doula has to bill for Medicaid alone and each one expects something different in order to pay a doula's claim.

The continued success of the profession needs to ensure that fee-for-service rates are high enough to cover the costs of administrative work, including the supervision a doula billing hub offers to aspiring doulas in their community. Many sources of funding in Oregon have been directed predominantly to non-profit organizations and exclude small female-owned businesses, like Doula Love. By ensuring a higher fee for service, you are assuring that the doula hub is sustainable and the need for grant funding to survive is reduced and ultimately less necessary. We passionately assert that all pregnant and birthing people, regardless of their socioeconomic status, qualify as a vulnerable and/or at-risk population. By requiring all insurance companies to cover doula care, we are able to provide care to every birthing person who desires this valuable service. To realize this, doula billing hubs will need to be recognized as a vital part of the system and receive the support they need in order to take on this immense privilege and challenge.

Thank You