

THE
TRANSPLANT
DOULA

SCOPE OF PRACTICE



The Role & Scope of a Transplant Doula

Position

The concept of companionship before, during, and after transplant is brand new to the organ failure world. The Transplant Doula™ recognizes the role of transplant doulas as valuable healthcare team members for organ transplant patients and their care circle.

Introduction

A transplant doula provides physical, emotional, practical, spiritual, and educational support to patients and their care circle through organ failure, organ transplant, or organ donation. The goals of a transplant doula are to advocate for their client in healthcare decisions, be a pillar of support to them through a unique and challenging process, and provide resources/referrals regarding organ failure, transplant, and donation.

Scope of Practice

As a transplant doula accompanies an individual through organ failure, the transplant process, or organ donation, their primary responsibility is to be present in every sense. A doula provides continuous support in various locations and situations: at home, in transplant centers, in hospitals, in rehab facilities, etc., during medical appointments, and in the pre and post-op rooms.

The facets of doula care are often divided into categories of physical,

emotional, practical, spiritual, and educational—as well as advocacy. While this makes it easier to analyze the benefits of doula care, it is essential to note that categories overlap and influence each other.

Physical Support

A doula can physically support their client in various ways if physical presence is a part of their services. They will help their client follow the physical care plan prepared by their transplant team and physicians. They can provide a steady hand for movement or a cool washcloth for a forehead. A doula may help with coping skills such as breathing techniques, relaxation, or visualization. They may suggest environmental changes (music, lighting, aromatherapy, etc.).

Finally, some doulas may offer hands-on. A doula's hands-on skills may include massage, therapeutic touch, or counterpressure. This physical contact can provide comfort, emotional reassurance, and support.

Emotional Support

A doula provides culturally appropriate emotional support to their client and their client's care circle, helping them cope with and navigate the organ failure, organ transplant, or organ donation journey. The foundation of emotional support is the doula's continuous presence and ability to

create and hold a trusting container for their client to expand or retreat into; to lay aside any preconceived ideas, biases, opinions, and judgments they may have so that their client's needs, wants, boundaries, and expectations can be honored. Transplant doulas practice active listening and are not there to "fix" anything.

A doula also supports their client's caregiver or certain care circle members when invited to and when appropriate; they might help them participate in their client's experience to the extent and in the way that they are both most comfortable with and that is helpful to their client.

Practical Support

The practical support a transplant doula provides patients and their care circle depends on the doula's training, comfort, and experience. There is no one list of services for this. However, it often includes arranging and coordinating appointments, gathering information and resources, and providing referrals to products and services that meet their client's needs.

Spiritual Support

A transplant doula must support their client's spiritual beliefs without prejudice. Some transplant doulas prefer to work within a specific spiritual framework. Still, all transplant doulas are responsible for clarifying what kind of spiritual support they provide through their practice materials (i.e., websites, marketing, etc.)

Educational Support

A transplant doula is trained to gather general information about organ failure, organ transplant, and organ donation. They are also trained in providing a variety of comfort measures and coping skills. The doula should offer evidence-based information in a manner that is as unbiased as possible and refer the client to reliable sources so that they may make their own decisions, imparting confidence they can draw on throughout their experience.

Doulas also offer information to the immediate caregiver/care circle/family to help them understand what to expect and how they might extend support.

Advocacy

In doula care, advocacy is defined as supporting clients in their right to make decisions about their own life. This includes (but is not limited to) matters of body, emotion, needs, spirit, and resource deployment. A doula should not speak for their client but should encourage them to communicate directly with their care team. Should a situation arise in which the doula chooses to speak up, it is to kindly remind someone of the client's wishes without confrontation. Transplant doulas encourage and guide their client and/or care team to dialogue with one another to obtain more information, clarify what they do not understand, or establish boundaries and expectations. This validates the client's role as the primary decision-maker concerning their health and needs.

Doula Responsibilities

A transplant doula should always reflect the core principle values of The Transplant Doula™ through all facets of their practice.

These are:

- Autonomy, or fostering the right to control the direction of one's life;
- Advocacy, or being committed to the needs and wants of one's client;
- Non-maleficence, or avoiding actions that cause harm;
- Justice, or treating individuals equitably and fostering fairness and equality;
- Fidelity, or honoring commitments and keeping promises, including fulfilling one's responsibilities of trust in professional relationships; and
- Veracity, or dealing truthfully with individuals at all times.

Translated to their scope of practice, a transplant doula is responsible for ensuring that:

- Direct and open communication between the client and care team members is encouraged.
- Evidence-based information is provided to the client in an unbiased manner.
- Compassionate presence is consistently provided without prejudice or judgment.
- Values of equality and fair and kind treatment are held in the highest regard.
- Protecting the client/doula relationship.

Limitations of Doula Practice

A transplant doula does not give medical advice or perform any medical tasks. While it is beneficial for a doula to be knowledgeable about medical procedures, their job is NOT to make decisions for the client, and they must never contradict health care providers. Instead, they may describe the procedure, explain why it is done, clarify its risks and benefits, offer resources to explore alternatives, and facilitate open discussion.

In addition, The Transplant Doula™ trained doula must continue their education to remain up-to-date on the current medical, legal, and social landscapes. They must also honor The Transplant Doula™ code of ethics through all engagements and communication.

Implications for Practice

The concept of a transplant doula is new, and more research is needed to explore the potential benefits, including (but not limited to) how continuous, one-on-one support by transplant doulas will improve the patient experience and sense of overall well-being, improve compliance with care plans, and more.

Because there are many benefits and no known adverse effects of doula care, The Transplant Doula™ recommends that the care of a transplant doula be available to every organ failure patient, transplant patient, living organ donor, or organ donor care circle.

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WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

We're working to shift the paradigm of care for organ failure patients, transplant patients, and living organ donors as the first and only transplant doula training and network!

Get ready to start your journey to becoming a transplant doula and find out how The Transplant Doula™ offers ongoing training, group and one-on-one coaching every month, and professional support...all under lifetime access.

We can't wait to welcome you!

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