

Network Provider Update

To: Medi-Cal network participants
From: Melinda Kjer
Director, Provider Relations and Contracting
Subject: **All Plan Letter 23-024: Doula Services**

October 2023

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) recently issued [All Plan Letter \(APL\) 23-024](#), "Doula Services." We are sharing a summary of this APL with you to ensure you are aware of the information, and you can apply the information to your practice or facility operations, where appropriate.

APL 23-024 explains how, effective January 1, 2023, managed care plans (MCPs) such as Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan are advised to provide doula services for prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal members. Doulas are non-licensed workers who provide health education, advocacy, and physical, emotional, and other non-medical support before, during, and after a birth.

What this means to you as a recommending provider:

- Blue Shield Promise members may request a written recommendation for doula services from you or from our Maternity Care Management team. A second recommendation for doula services can be provided for nine additional visits for up to 12 months after the end of a pregnancy.
- To recommend a member for doula services, complete the [Maternity Program referral form](#) and fax it to (844) 893-1211.
- Blue Shield Promise will take financial responsibility for doula services provided to our members.
- For more information, visit the [Blue Shield Promise Maternity Program web page](#) or call the Blue Shield Promise Maternity Care Management team at (888) 802-4410, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

APL summary

- The APL recommends the following doula services:
 - One initial visit
 - Up to eight additional visits, including prenatal and postpartum visits
 - Support during labor and delivery, including in cases of stillbirth, abortion, or miscarriage
 - Up to two extended three-hour postpartum visits
- Doula services require a written recommendation by a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts acting within their scope of practice under state law. A second recommendation is required for up to nine additional visits during the postpartum period.
 - Criteria for recommendation for doula services include being pregnant currently or in the past year, being likely to benefit from doula services, and requesting doula services.
 - Doulas must verify the member's Medi-Cal eligibility.

- Only one visit may be billed per day, excluding labor and delivery. A prenatal or postpartum visit may be billed on the same day as labor and delivery, stillbirth, abortion, or miscarriage support.
- The APL lists services that are not covered by Medi-Cal as doula services, including belly binding, birthing ceremonies, classes on babywearing, massage, photography, placenta encapsulation, shopping, vaginal steams, and yoga.
- Doulas are required to document the dates, times and duration of services they provide.
- The APL explains the qualifications, training, and experience doulas must have to provide covered services, along with continuing education and provider enrollment requirements. They must be registered with Medi-Cal and can enroll through the [Provider Application and Validation for Enrollment \(PAVE\) portal](#).
- MCPs will reimburse doulas in accordance with their network provider contract and DHCS requirements for clean claims and timely payments.
- The APL advises MCPs to contract with individual doulas and doula groups to support an adequate doula network that will give members access to doula services.
- If an in-network doula is not available, MCPs may facilitate access to out-of-network doula services.
- The APL advises MCPs to work with their network hospitals and birthing centers to allow doulas to be present during labor and delivery.

This summary is only meant as a brief description of the APL. Please see the APL itself for additional background and the complete requirements. The full text of APL 23-024 may be found at this URL: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/MMCDAPLsandPolicyLetters/APL2023/APL23-024.pdf> (Links to the DHCS.ca.gov website will take you off of the Blue Shield Promise website.)

Additional resources

- [Questions and Answers about Doula Services - for Recommending Providers](#)
- [DHCS Doula Services web page](#)
- [DHCS Doula Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) Sheet](#)
- [DHCS Provider Manual, Doula Services](#)