

Whether you're a first-time mama or this baby will join siblings at home, each pregnancy brings its own special needs, and your doula should be able to expertly meet those needs. Before you decide to hire a doula, here are some questions to ask at your first meeting (plan for a 60-minute first meeting):

- ◆ What is your training; through which organization are you certified?
- ◆ What continuing education programs have you completed?
- ◆ What are your fees and completely describe all services included in these fees and what is not included? What happens with fees if the doula is unable to attend the birth?
- ◆ Can you describe your doula style and how you most often support a woman in labor.
- ◆ Do you have any other clients around my due date? Do you have a backup doula?
- ◆ How often will we meet before and after my labor begins? At what point do your doula services begin when I go into labor?
- ◆ How will we communicate, and how often, especially if I'm not sure I'm in labor? Are you always on call and able to talk/text with me?
- ◆ Have you attended births that have ended up as C-sections or with complications and what has your role been?
- ◆ Are there any limitations to the length of time you will stay with me for a long labor? How long do you stay after the birth?
- ◆ How do you support my partner, and how do you work with the medical staff?
- ◆ How do you feel about medical interventions, including epidurals or other pain medications? How do you feel about a completely natural approach to labor and delivery?
- ◆ Can you help with breastfeeding? Do you offer extended postpartum support?
- ◆ Can you provide references? Would she be open to a second interview conversation if additional questions come up?

After you meet for the first time (take notes!) spend a few minutes thinking about your initial impressions. The birth journey is such an intimate experience, and you should feel comfortable with your doula. Some things to think about before you make this important decision:

- ◆ Do her fees fit within your budget?
- ◆ Did your doula put you at ease with her personal style, especially listening carefully and fully answering your questions? Is her communication style compatible with yours?
- ◆ Did your doula seem knowledgeable, and did she ask questions about you and your goals?
- ◆ Did her views on pregnancy, labor, and medical care match up with your own?
- ◆ Did she take enough time with you, or did you feel rushed? Was it easy to set up an appointment?
- ◆ Did she seem compassionate? If your partner was there, what was his or her impression?

Good luck with your interview and in hiring your doula!