Doulas: An Additional Path to Positive Pregnancy Outcomes in the Northwoods
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Objectives
- Recognize how Doulas can make a difference in maternal and child outcomes, particularly when SUD is part of the presentation
- Learn about the training and functions of Birth Doulas with an emphasis on the need for cultural congruence
- Understand how Birth Doulas fit with “usual care” as it is delivered in most Wisconsin healthcare systems

Your Presenters
- Sheila Weix: Director of Substance Services FHC Alcohol and Drug Recovery, MCHS. RN currently in 3rd decade of SUD work. Lived experience as a mom and grandmother
- Dr. Erin Tenney: Clinical Faculty Midwifery & Women’s Health Dept., Frontier Nursing University. Birth Doula for 21 years and trainer for 8 years. Certified Nurse Midwife for 11 years. Experience in various roles providing Maternal & Child Health Services in Tribal Health Clinics for 18 years. Lived experience as a mother of 3 children
- Jaime Karl RN: Perinatal Nurse FHC Alcohol & Drug Recovery. 5 years experience as a NICU nurse and Birth Center float nurse. Personal & professional interest in birth work. Lived experience with planned home births with LPM and hospital delivery due to Pregnancy induced HTN
Why consider Doulas when looking at the care and needs of pregnant women?

- Maternal and infant mortality rates for African-American and Native American mothers and babies are far higher than the rates for white mothers and babies.
- Published data indicate that one of the most effective tools to improve labor and delivery outcomes is the continuous presence of support personnel, such as a doula. Given that there are no associated measurable harms, this resource is probably underutilized.

Cochrane Review: Appears Beneficial

- According to a 2017 Cochrane Database Systematic Review, “Continuous support in labor may improve a number of outcomes for both mother and baby, and no adverse outcomes have been identified. Continuous support from a person who is present solely to provide support, is not a member of the woman’s own network, is experienced in providing labor support, and has at least a modest amount of training (such as a doula), appears beneficial.”

Impact on Outcomes and Cost

- “Rigorous studies show that doula care reduces the likelihood of such consequential and costly interventions as cesarean birth and epidural pain relief while increasing the likelihood of a shorter labor, a spontaneous vaginal birth, higher Apgar scores for babies and a positive childbirth experience. Other smaller studies suggest that doula support is associated with increased breastfeeding and decreased postpartum depression. This body of research has not identified any harms of continuous labor support.”
Training and Function of Birth Doulas

What is the difference between a midwife and a doula?

What is a doula?
...a trained professional who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to a mother before, during and shortly after childbirth to help her achieve the healthiest, most satisfying experience possible.

www.dona.org
What is cultural safety?

Key aspects of culturally safe care
- Know the history of colonization and understand how this leads to contemporary health inequities
- Know yourself (care provider) in terms of identity, positionality & privilege
- The person receiving care defines "safe" care

Culturally based Birth Doula training in Lac du Flambeau
The role of the Birth Doula in supporting women including those with substance abuse disorders

How do Doulas fit with “usual care”?
- Overview of the Doula relationship to other members of the healthcare team – Dr. Tenney
- Dialogue about the “sticking points” Jaime Karl RN & Dr. Tenney

Conclusion and Next Steps
- Doulas are an evidence-based approach to patient-centered care that can make a difference in maternal-child outcomes.
- An initial Doula training was done in the HOPE Consortium in 2019
- Another Doula training will be offered in the next 12 months under our RCORP-NAS grant
- Dr. Tenney has joined the FHC A&DRC practice on a part-time basis
- We are investigating how we can provide consistent access to culturally congruent doula services for the women and families who wish to have them
Questions?

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