



## **Quebec Association of Doulas**

### **Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct**

In this by-law, unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms have the following meanings:

- a) "QAD" means the Quebec Association of Doulas
- b) "Doula" is a person trained in the perinatal field and a member of QAD, who advises couple before a birth so that they can make informed choices regarding their place of birth and the different stages of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding. They provide personalized, physical and emotional support before, during and after the birth of the child. They are a non-medical birth attendant who is present during the pregnancy and/or throughout the delivery and/or until the first weeks of the baby's life.
- c) "Client" means an individual, family, couple, group or organization receiving doula services.
- d) "Backup" A doula who has been trained and chosen by the client's doula to replace them in the event of a major incident.
- e) "Training" Which is training from a school of childbirth support.

## **Section I - Role of a doula**

1.01. A doula shall perform their work in a manner that respects the choices, beliefs, dignity and freedom of the person being accompanied. They must be objective in their speech and in the choice of documents.

1.02. A doula does everything in their power to establish and maintain trust between them and the client. They must respect their client's values, beliefs and choices in all mandates.

1.03. Upon acceptance of an agreement and during its execution, a doula must take into account the limits of their competence, according to the practices resulting from basic and continuing education.

1.04. A doula must refrain from working in circumstances, places, or emotional or physical states, that may compromise the quality of their services or the dignity of the practice.

1.05. A doula may not practice while under the influence of substances that may impair their faculties.

1.06. A doula shall not interfere in any way with a client's free choice to consult with another doula or another professional, or interfere with the client's freedom of choice to seek expert advice.

1.07. All persons have the right to be accompanied without discrimination. A doula may, with the explicit consent of the client, refer them to another doula or professional if they feel it is in the client's best interest. If a doula chooses to make a referral for any reason, whether it is in the best interest of the client or the doula, the doula must offer alternative resources.

1.08. A doula must conduct themselves in a manner that is beyond reproach for their client's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. A doula must be aware of power dynamics in the relationship between the client and themselves. They should not take advantage of a client physically, emotionally or financially. It is strongly recommended to refuse tasks that are not included in the mandate.

1.09. A doula should refrain from interfering in the client's private life in matters that are not related to the services offered. If asked to do so and it is outside of the doula's scope of practice, the doula should establish boundaries and refer to another doula or professional as necessary.

1.10. A doula should never speak on behalf of QAD unless mandated to do so.

## **Section II - Integrity and objectivity**

2.01. A doula shall present themselves and carry out their responsibilities with loyalty, honesty, transparency, integrity and objectivity. A doula shall disregard any third-party intervention that could alter the performance of their professional services and be detrimental to their client.

2.02. A doula must refrain from performing acts reserved for other professions.

2.03. A doula may only accompany a person into labour if a midwife or physician is present (see Appendix I - *QAD's statement of position on unassisted childbirth*).

2.04. A doula must maintain and upgrade their knowledge through continuing education according to current requirements.

2.05. A doula shall refrain from guaranteeing any result from the use of their services.

2.06. A doula shall recognize the limits of their knowledge and skills and refer the client to a colleague or other professional, as appropriate.

2.07. A doula is committed to providing equivalent service regardless of the client's culture, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, mental or physical abilities, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other personal preference or characteristic, condition or status.

2.08. A doula may receive, in addition to their fees, a bonus or benefit of 100\$ or less. The purchase and/or sale of derivative products or services shall not infringe on the service.

2.09. A doula must act in good faith and must not be in a position of breach of trust or unfair practices. For example, taking credit for the work and expertise of another doula or professional, misappropriation of clients, backbiting, slander, false representation, etc.

2.10. A doula shall not persistently induce or solicit a client to use their services.

2.11. A doula shall not influence a client to perform illegal or fraudulent actions.

### **Section III - Commitment and responsibility**

3.01. A doula shall provide details of the services offered and their mutual commitment to the client in writing. A doula shall sign a service contract with their client, including clarification of payment terms.

3.02. A doula may terminate their services with their client in cases of extreme circumstances (death of a loved one, medical reason, serious disagreement between the couple/client).

3.03. Before discontinuing services, a doula must ensure that the client can continue to obtain services from another doula and contribute to the necessary extent.

3.04. A doula who wishes to work with a backup for birth attendance must ensure that the backup is able to meet the client's needs and explain to the client the circumstances under which a backup could replace the doula. If a doula does not have the option of using a backup, the client must be explicitly informed.

3.05. A doula shall inform QAD when a member has seriously breached the Code of Ethics or if there is reason to believe that a doula is not practicing according to recognized competencies/training.

3.06. A doula incurs personal liability by their presence alone. A doula may not include a clause in a contract for professional services discharging this liability.

3.07. It is recommended that a doula keeps a summary record of encounters with clients.

### **Section IV - Professional Confidentiality**

4.01. A doula is bound by professional secrecy. Access to confidential records or information shall be by court order only or when required by law.

4.02. When a doula is working with a couple or a family, each person's right to confidentiality must be protected.

4.03. A doula may only use information of confidential nature or any information obtained in the course of their accompaniment with the express consent of the client or :

- when required by law or court order
- when it concerns a minor and the person legally responsible

4.04. A doula shall maintain confidentiality in their use of social media and avoid using any personally identifiable information:

- whether in a private doula exchange group
- whether it is on their professional page/site or even their personal page

## **Section V - Fee setting and payment**

5.01. A doula shall inform their client of the costs of their services in the signed agreement and shall provide all necessary explanations for the understanding of the fees.

5.02. Fees must be justifiable in terms of the services rendered. A doula shall consider the following in setting fees:

- services offered (number of prenatal encounters, on-call time, attendance at delivery, postpartum encounters/support)
- their experience and training
- availability and/or exclusivity

5.03. A doula may not require payment in advance of services offered.

5.04. A doula may not claim fees for services that were not provided but may charge a cancellation fee in accordance with the Consumer Protection Act (10% or \$50 maximum).

## **Conclusion**

We believe that these rules of conduct are complete and that they constitute a reasonable framework in order to offer the public high-quality accompaniment services.

QAD has the right to revoke membership if there is a breach of the Code of Ethics or non-compliant practices.

## **Appendix I - *QAD's statement of position on unassisted childbirth***

### **Intent of the document**

QAD wishes to clarify its position on UC and to generate reflections among its doulas who are considering accompanying clients planning an UC.

### **Definition**

Unassisted childbirth (UC): A free, informed and intentional decision to give birth without the medical assistance of a health care professional (physician/midwife) authorized to assist in childbirth.

Different names: freebirth, DIY (do it yourself) birth.

Reasons that may lead to UC:

- Confidence in their autonomy without the influence of outside expertise.
- Apprehension of the lack of support and respect in the care offered in their area.
- Costs of midwifery or physician services too high (for parents without access to Medicare)

### **Position of medical authorities in Quebec**

With UC slowly gaining popularity in some countries, some medical associations around the world, including The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC), the College of Physicians and the Order of Midwives, have taken a position against the practice of UC and recall that they are the only ones authorized to "practice spontaneous childbirth".

Section 6 of the Midwifery Act does not allow people who are giving birth to choose a friend, cousin, doula or spouse to care for them; only professionals can "monitor and evaluate the pregnancy, labour, and delivery" and "perform a spontaneous birth.

QAD invites its doulas to review the positions taken by medical organizations in the region where they practice.

**QAD recognizes that:**

- QAD doulas are trained to provide physical, emotional and informational support, any medical practice related to pregnancy and childbirth is outside of their scope of practice.
- Childbirth belongs to the women and the people who give birth and that each person has the right to make an informed decision about who will be present at the birth.
- It may be considered discriminatory for a person to undergo a supervised birth by a specialist if it violates their dignity and freedom. Anyone with values and beliefs other than giving birth with a midwife or doctor should have the freedom of choice.

**QAD recommendations:**

QAD strongly encourages doulas to consider the following points in their thinking related to accompanying an UC:

- What are the legal issues related to who attends an UC in my province or the province where my clients reside?
- What are the potential implications for me under the circumstances?
- Could someone other than the parents, such as a lawyer or medical provider, take legal action against me?
- Am I prepared to face the potential consequences of such a claim, whether or not it is justified?
- Have I clarified the expectations of prospective parents in relation to my scope of practice?
- Am I expected to perform tasks that are outside the scope of practice as recognized by the QAD?

**Standards of Practice**

QAD doula agrees to abide by the Code of Ethics when obtaining or renewing membership.

## **References**

**Collège des médecins**, Québec, [www.cmq.org](http://www.cmq.org)

**Charte des droits et liberté de la personne C-12**, Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse, Québec, [www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca)

**Conseil du statut de la femme**, Québec, [www.csf.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca),

**Loi sur les sages-femmes**, Québec, [www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca)

**Maternité et dignité**

<https://materniteetdignite.wordpress.com/category/accouchement-non-assiste/>

**Ordre des sages-femmes du Québec**, [www.osfq.org](http://www.osfq.org)