



October 19th, 2020

Dr. Karyl Rattay
Director, Delaware Division of Public Health

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Wayne A. Smith
President & CEO

Doulas in Hospital During Pandemic

Dear Dr. Rattay,

Thank you for reaching out to our association to discuss how Doulas can access hospitals with their clients within this unique pandemic environment.

As you are aware, Delaware hospitals individually adjust visitation policies in order to maximize patient and staff safety based upon the infection risks they face in their local service areas and consistent with best health and safety practices. With the COVID-19 virus not under control and in the current absence of a vaccine or therapy that can provide individual protection against the virus, it is foreseeable that hospitals may change visitation policies as warranted with changing local risk assessments.

Doula Presence During Childbirth. In order to acknowledge the important role that doulas continue to play during childbirth, particularly in the challenging pandemic environment, all Delaware hospitals offering obstetric services within the hospital as of the date of this letter will allow a Doula to be present during childbirth as a second visitor while the hospital has pandemic related visitor restrictions in place.

Delaware hospitals individually will operationalize Doula presence during this period of restricted hospital visitation. It is expected that a mother will inform her care giver and the delivering hospital that a Doula has been engaged and that it is desired that the Doula be in attendance during the birth process. Doulas will be required to undergo health risk assessments as other visitors and staff do who enter a hospital.

Should a hospital with a current one-visitor policy for childbirth need to further restrict visitation in the face of elevated COVID-19 risk, a hospital may decide that health and safety considerations warrant the exclusion of visitors including Doulas.

We understand the interest in clarifying the role of Doulas post-pandemic and look forward to working with Delaware's Doulas in order to examine potential ways to address issues consistent with safe delivery of children and safe care of women in childbirth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wayne A. Smith".

Wayne A. Smith