

NYS Senate Hearing on Doula Benefits – March 7, 2023

CDPHP Testimony from Dr. Elizabeth Warner, Chief Medical Officer, CDPHP

Introduction

Hi, I'm Dr. Elizabeth Warner, Chief Medical Officer at Capital District Physicians' Health Plan, more commonly known as CDPHP.

I would like to thank you for welcoming CDPHP to participate in today's hearing to share our experience and knowledge related to doula services and the reasons why we made the decision to provide reimbursement for these services for our Commercial line of business.

For those who may not know, CDPHP is a not-for-profit, physician-founded health plan serving 400,000 customers in 36 counties throughout NY. CDPHP takes great pride in the high-quality care and superior customer service we have become known for, and we work hard to ensure our members have access to the very best health care services at the most affordable price.

Why did we decide to offer this benefit?

CDPHP believes that maternal morbidity and mortality in America is at an unacceptable level with two-thirds of all maternal deaths deemed preventable. We know that birth and postpartum doulas have been proven to provide benefits that support healthy birth outcomes and long-term health for the whole family, which is why we decided to consider offering this as a benefit.

Here is what we found:

Evidence shows that individuals with continuous support from a doula experience positive birth outcomes, including:

- 39 percent decrease in the risk of Cesarean birth¹
- 22 percent decrease in the risk of preterm birth²
- 60 percent reduction in requests for an epidural¹
- Patient is four times less likely to have a low birthweight baby³
- Patient is two times less likely to experience a birth complication³

Additionally, studies have found that individuals with continuous support from a doula are more likely to experience positive long-term health outcomes, such as:

- Increased likelihood of breastfeeding³
- Advanced maternal health equity⁴
- Reduced racial disparities⁵
- Lower odds of postpartum anxiety and depression⁶

Doula services are supported and recommended by leading experts in the field of maternal health, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Nurse-Midwives, World Health Organization, Society for Maternal and Fetal Medicine, March of Dimes, and more.

Finally, doula services support our health plan's quality goals, as well as our mission of providing our members with comprehensive benefits designed to keep them healthy.

How does the benefit work?

Starting January 2023, eligible CDPHP Commercial members, covered spouses, and dependents of can be reimbursed up to \$1,500 for out-of-pocket costs related to in-person or virtual doula services provided by a certified and/or trained doula.

Doula services eligible for this benefit can be provided before pregnancy, during pregnancy, or postpartum.

Examples of services eligible for reimbursement include:

- Prenatal education classes
- Pregnancy support
- Childbirth support
- Postpartum support

Summary

In summary, CDPHP is proud to be the only health plan in our immediate service area expanding access to doula services, with the exception of the NYS Medicaid pilot in Western New York. It is worth noting that due to inadequate reimbursement rates in the Medicaid program, CDPHP is unable to offer this benefit to our Medicaid members. Therefore, any mandate requiring plans cover these services for Medicaid members must be met with increased reimbursement from the state.

I would like to thank you for your time and attention to this important issue and welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you.

¹ Hodnett ED. Gates S Hofmeyr GJ. Sakala C. Continuous Support for Women During Childbirth. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. CD003766, (2003).

² Kozhimannil et al., 2016. NIH

³ Gruber <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3647727/>

⁴ Health Affairs <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20210525.295915/full/>

⁵ Robles-Fradet and Greenwald, 2022. National Health Law.

⁶ Falconi et al., 2022. The Lancet.

⁷ Estimate based on 2020 CDPHP incidence of C-section and preterm birth in fully insured commercial members and 6% utilization rate applied from 2013 [survey](#).