



## Doulas and Family Support Workers

[Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford](#) offers free [doula](#) services to pregnant teens and young adults through age 25 and younger in Winnebago County. Although many people in the United States are unfamiliar with their work, doulas are one of the most important supports a new parent can have.

Doulas are trained professionals who can help young mothers before, during, and after the birth of their child. They can visit you at home and in local hospitals, offering a wide range of resources:

- Doulas can help you prepare for the experience of giving birth.
- They can stay by your side as you give birth, making sure that all your needs are met.
- They can advocate for you in your interactions with healthcare professionals as you give birth.
- They can provide the support, comfort, and information you need to make the best decisions for you and your baby.

As of 2013, only [6%](#) of American mothers used doulas. But doulas can have an extremely positive impact on birth outcomes. One [study](#) found that women who worked with a doula had better outcomes on all of the following measures:

- They were four times less likely to have a baby with low birth weight.
- They were two times less likely to have complications during birth.
- They were more likely to initiate breastfeeding.
- They had increased self-efficacy because of their doula's communication and encouragement.

Other [research](#) indicates that doulas can have even more positive effects:

- Women who had continuous support from a doula saw a 39% decrease in the risk of cesarean section (C-section).
- Their labor was 41 minutes shorter, on average.
- They had a more than 31% lower chance of being dissatisfied with their birth experience.

All of this highlights just how much a one-on-one relationship with a doula can improve your pregnancy and birth experience.

And doulas aren't the only Easterseals professionals who can help you with your pregnancy and parenting. [Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford](#) also offers the free

services of [family support workers](#). These professionals can provide all kinds of support and information. While you're pregnant or adjusting to becoming a parent, family support workers can speak with you about any of the following:

- Having a healthy pregnancy, labor, and delivery
- Challenges with breastfeeding
- Understanding your baby's learning, development, and behavior
- Staying healthy and keeping your baby healthy

Family support workers can also provide technical services like developmental screenings, which help you make sure your baby is growing and learning normally. Family support workers can refer you to other services that can help your child and give you ideas for ways to bond with your new baby, like arts and crafts, belly casts, and journaling.