



**BCAAFC | BC Association of
Aboriginal Friendship Centres**

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Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program: Changes to doula eligibility requirements

More Indigenous birth workers will have access to the Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program (DAFGP) under its new eligibility requirements. The program, delivered by the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, provides Indigenous families living in BC up to \$1,000.00 for doula support. Since 2013, the program has increased healthy birth outcomes for Indigenous families by removing the cost barrier to accessing doula services and bringing the birthing process closer to home.

The program's previous doula eligibility requirements included certification through non-Indigenous oriented organizations, creating a barrier to accessing the program for many Indigenous birth workers. The new changes recognize that eligibility to the program must consider Indigenous peoples' longstanding and enduring traditions of birth work.

These changes are already being celebrated by Indigenous service providers across BC. "The shift in requirements allows our Birth Keepers to be free of colonial restraints [...] that otherwise impede the good work that has always been traditionally carried out", shared the Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Center Association (FRAFCA) Indigenous Birth Keeper Collective. "The [new] requirements give families greater opportunity to access culturally-safe, trauma-informed, traditional birth supports."

Indigenous birth work positively influences Indigenous health, despite the disruption of Indigenous birth practices through policies such as residential schools and the biomedicalization of birth. Doulas can act as advocates for families and make positive contributions in situations where people are cited as high-risk, are without family supports, or are birthing away from their home communities. The program has also recently released a travel grant to support doulas for this purpose.

Indigenous families look to their own rich cultural traditions to inform their pregnancy-related experiences, and Indigenous doulas can facilitate incorporating traditional practices into the birthing process. As Indigenous doula care emerges as a best practice in Indigenous reproductive and maternal health care, assessment and response, the DAFGP is proud to increase access to Indigenous doula supports.

Visit <http://bcaafc.com/dafgp/> for more information about the grant program.

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