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EMPOWERING BIRTH EXPERIENCES

THE ROLE OF DOULAS IN MATERNAL HEALTH

You may have seen recent communication from the Franklin County Cooperative about enhanced family forming support, including the implementation of doula reimbursement from United Healthcare. But do you know the benefits that come along with the utilization of a doula?

THE IMPACT OF DOULAS ON MATERNAL HEALTH

Doulas are crucial in combating the rising [maternal mortality rates](#) and addressing racial disparities prevalent in pregnancy and postpartum care in the United States. Black women and birthing individuals consistently face disproportionately poor health outcomes, with maternal mortality rates escalating over the past three decades. Shockingly, Black women are [three times more likely](#) to experience pregnancy and childbirth-related complications than their white counterparts. Recognizing this alarming

trend, both the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine have emphasized the pivotal role of doulas in enhancing labor and delivery outcomes, highlighting the continuous presence of a doula during pregnancy as a crucial intervention.

[Community-based doulas](#) have appeared as a promising solution to bridge these health disparities, particularly for marginalized pregnant individuals who encounter discrimination and mistreatment within the medical system. By operating within the communities they serve, these doulas possess an inherent understanding of their clients' needs and can forge strong, trusting relationships. This enables them to provide tailored support to those at the highest risk, thereby contributing significantly to the mitigation of racial disparities in maternal health outcomes. Studies have also shown that doula care results in [substantial cost savings](#) by reducing the need for medical interventions including cesareans, instrument assisted births, NICU admissions, and [pain medication](#).

DISMISSING MYTHS ABOUT DOULAS

To fully appreciate the impact of doulas, it's essential to dismiss common myths surrounding their role. The first thing that needs to be distinguished is the difference between a doula and a midwife or OB/GYN. A midwife or OB/GYN provides medical care throughout the childbirth process, including delivery, **while a doula focuses on preparing the parent for birth and offering emotional, mental, and cultural support during labor and delivery regardless of the birth setting.** The doula is not a medical professional, but rather a complementary support person. It's not uncommon for individuals to engage both a doula and a midwife during their pregnancy journey.

Another misconception is that a doula speak on behalf of the laboring person. However, the role of a doula is to empower the birthing parent and their partner to express their own wishes and make informed decisions. They guide them through their

options, providing evidence-based information and encouraging self-advocacy. Whether planning a home birth or hospital delivery, with or without medications or cesarean, a doula offers personalized support tailored to individual needs.

ENHANCING THE BIRTHING EXPERIENCE

Having a doula does not replace the existing support system for the birthing parent; rather, it enhances it. While family or friends provide valuable encouragement during birth, a doula brings unique expertise as a trained childbirth professional. Simply having previous childbirth experience does not equate to the specialized support a doula offers.

DOULA COVERAGE UNDER THE FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE HEALTH PLAN

Members enrolled in the health plan have two (2) options for obtaining doula services:

- 1. Maven Virtual Doulas:** Explore the innovative Maven Virtual Doulas service at no cost to you. Engage with a virtual doula by joining Maven.
- 2. UHC In-Person Doula Coverage:** The Doula Reimbursement Program reimburses the cost (up to \$3,000) of in-person and/or telehealth services obtained from any certified doula. The Doula Reimbursement Program allows you the flexibility to choose a doula that aligns with your preferences.

[Learn More about Doula Coverage](#)

[Access Family Forming: Maternity, Fertility, & Maven Wallet Information](#)



ADDRESSING INFERTILITY AND FAMILY FORMING

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

The [World Health Organization](#) estimates that roughly 1 in 6 people worldwide are affected by infertility. This does not include the many LGBTQ+ couples and those that choose to parent without a partner who may need assisted reproductive medical treatments to start and grow families. Infertility can be [primary](#) or [secondary](#). Primary infertility is when a pregnancy

has never been achieved by a person, and secondary infertility is when at least one prior pregnancy has been achieved.

CAUSES OF INFERTILITY

Infertility may be caused by a number of different factors, in either the male or female reproductive systems. However, it is sometimes not possible to explain the causes of infertility. These factors include issues such as reproductive tract obstruction, hormonal imbalances, and abnormalities in sperm or egg quality. Lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol, obesity, and environmental toxins also play a role. However, in some cases, the exact cause of infertility remains unexplained.

IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING INFERTILITY

A diverse range of individuals, including heterosexual, same-sex, and older partners, as well as those choosing to parent alone and individuals with medical conditions such as cancer survivors, may require infertility management and fertility care services. The ability to start a family and have children is a fundamental human right recognized by the [World Health Organization](#). Individuals and couples should have the freedom to decide when and how many children they want. However, infertility can pose a barrier to exercising these rights, resulting in profound social and emotional consequences specifically among women.

Addressing infertility is crucial for mitigating [gender inequality](#). Despite both men and women being susceptible to infertility, women in relationships with men are disproportionately stigmatized as infertile, irrespective of their actual fertility status. Infertility can profoundly impact the lives of affected couples, with women often experiencing violence, divorce, social stigma, emotional distress, depression, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem.

FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE HEALTH PLAN'S APPROACH

The Franklin County Cooperative Health Plan recognizes the importance of addressing infertility and offers comprehensive coverage for various family-forming options. This coverage includes maternity and fertility services as well as reimbursement for the acquisition of donor materials, adoption, and surrogacy expenses.

Specific to fertility, the health plan covers fertility treatments and fertility medication for enrolled employees and/or spouses/domestic partners.

Coverage is only available if services are received from in-network providers. Applicable annual deductibles, coinsurance, and annual out-of-pocket maximums apply and the combined lifetime maximum benefit for all medical and pharmacy expenses is \$30,000 per eligible member. Services covered under the medical and pharmacy benefits include:

- **Medical:** Fertility preservation, IUI/IVF, associated donor medical expenses, and egg retrieval/storage
- **Pharmacy:** Fertility medication

To further support individuals and couples on their fertility journey, the health plan recommends engaging with Maven, a comprehensive virtual support program. Maven complements maternity and fertility benefits, offering personalized care from preconception to postpartum. Additionally, Maven provides access to the Fertility Wallet, offering a \$10,000 lifetime maximum benefit per household for the acquisition of donor materials not covered under the health plan including materials obtained from a cryo-bank. Enrollment in Maven is confidential and free to employees and spouses/domestic partners enrolled in the health plan. Activate your free membership by downloading the Maven Clinic app or visiting mavenclinic.com/join/franklincounty.

Explore the resources below to learn more or go to BeWell.franklincountyohio.gov/programs/Maternity-Family:

- [Family Forming and Maternity Benefits Brochure](#)
- [Maven Overview](#)
- [Family Forming and Maternity Benefits FAQ](#)



TAKING ACTION AGAINST PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE

NATIONAL TAKE BACK DAY AND YEAR-ROUND DISPOSAL SOLUTIONS

When prescription medicine is no longer needed, it's common to overlook it, leaving it unused in a drawer or medicine cabinet. However, keeping unneeded medicine in the house can pose risks to children, pets, teens, and adults if accidentally ingested or misused. In light of the current drug overdose epidemic in the United States, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) National Prescription Drug Take Back Day underscores the DEA's dedication to the safety and health of Americans. This initiative urges the public to remove unneeded medications from their homes, serving as a preventive measure against medication misuse and the initiation of opioid addiction.

The National Prescription Drug Take Back Day aims to offer a safe, convenient, and responsible method of disposing of prescription drugs while also educating the general public about the importance of properly disposing of any unwanted, unused, or expired prescription medications. This year, National Take Back Day falls on Saturday, April 27, with collection hours from 10 am to 2 pm at various locations across Central Ohio. You can safely and anonymously dispose of unneeded medications - [click here](#) to find a collection site near you.

While the DEA conducts a Prescription Take Back Day biannually, SWACO collaborates with different communities in Franklin County to host collection events throughout the year. There are numerous locations throughout Franklin County that offer year-round prescription and medication drop-off services. To locate a drop-off location near you, [click here](#). Each site accepts dry prescription pills with no questions asked.

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, contact the 24/7 substance use helpline at **1.855.780.5955**.



Maddie's Culinary Commentary

April 2024

Provided by OhioHealth

3 Tips to Create Balanced Meals for the Whole Family

1. Serve Nutritious Sides

Are chicken nuggets and pizza the only foods that your family will eat? Add in some more nutrition with your favorite [fruit and veggie sides](#). These can be offered to picky eaters on the same plate without forcing them to be eaten. This adds extra vitamins, minerals and fiber to your favorite meals.

2. Get Creative With Veggies

Sometimes veggies can seem off-putting. Including them in [smoothies](#), [pasta sauces](#) or even [brownies](#) can be a more acceptable way of eating them.

3. Make it a Family Affair

Cooking as a family can be a great way to expand a picky eater's horizons. Especially for young kids, having some ownership of preparing a meal can help make them more inclined to try a new food. Check out [the link](#) to learn age-appropriate kitchen tasks for kids!

Avoiding the ["All or Nothing"](#) Mentality

We can be tempted to think of foods as either good or bad. In reality, all foods provide some nutrients that we need, some just have more than others. At the end of the day, making sure you and your family are fed and satisfied is most important. Include nutritious foods where you can by continuing to offer new foods in low-stress situations, like alongside a preferred food. And remember, taste buds change, so continue to offer new foods as you can!

April Recipe



[Veggie Mac & Cheese](#)



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Schedule a nutrition counseling session with Maddie by visiting [this link](#).

