

# Doula Services for End of Life



Partners In Care

# Presenters from Partners in Care



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# Agenda

1. Partners In Care Overview
2. Opportunities & Considerations
3. Training & Outcomes
4. What a Doula Is/Is Not
5. Testimonials

## Partners In Care: Overview

**Partners In Care** is a nonprofit, community-based healthcare organization based in Bend, Oregon, and has been serving Central Oregon for over 45 years. Originally founded in 1979 as Friends of Hospice, it has grown into the region's largest and most trusted provider of **hospice, home health, and palliative care services.**

### **Mission & Philosophy**

Partners In Care provides patient-centered care that honors the dignity and needs of those we serve. We sustain an organization that enriches and transforms the lives of our patients, families, team, and community. Our philosophy emphasizes comfort, dignity, and support for patients and families, especially during advanced illness and end-of-life transitions.

## Opportunities & Considerations

End-of-life doulas provide emotional, spiritual, and practical support to individuals and families during the dying process.

Embedding such a program within an established organization offers unique advantages but also presents considerations that must be thoughtfully addressed.

# | Opportunities

## **Enhanced Continuity of Care**

- Increase support for patients and families
- A thread between service lines

## **Staff Collaboration and Optimization**

- Promotes interdisciplinary teamwork

## **Community Engagement and Differentiation**

- Positions the organization as a leader in holistic care
- Attracts donors, volunteers, and media attention

# Considerations

## **Cultural and Operational Integration**

- Resistance from clinical staff unfamiliar with doula roles
- Need for clear role definitions and boundaries

## **Training and Standardization**

- Requires investment in curriculum development and quality assurance

## **Funding**

- Reliance on philanthropy

## **Measuring Impact**

- Difficult to quantify doula support
- Need for qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools

## Recommendations for Implementation

- Partner with a doula organization: To guide and create the curriculum
- Pilot Program: Start small with a defined patient population
- Stakeholder Engagement: Include staff early
- Training Framework: Develop a robust onboarding and mentorship model
- Evaluation Metrics: Track satisfaction
- Sustainability Plan: Own the curriculum and train the trainers

## Doula Integration

- The first cohort of **doula volunteers** have served individuals engaged with both Palliative Care and Transitions programs. This model is especially effective when there is time to:
  - Build meaningful connections
  - Provide ongoing emotional and practical support
  - Facilitate life review and legacy work
- Also included hospice patients that were currently assigned to a doula volunteer.

# | Training

- **Requirements**

- **Training:** 8 hours in person, 8 hour independent study
- **Service Commitment:** Participation for a minimum of one year, preferably through patient's end of life.
- **Meetings:** Attendance at monthly resource sharing/support meetings.
- **Comfort Level:** High comfort with the dying process.
- **Diversity Sensitivity:** Respect for all forms of diversity, including gender, religion, sexual orientation, race, culture, and ethnicity.
- **Personal Qualities:** Must be dependable, compassionate, flexible, resourceful.

# Average Score Improvements by Competency (1-5 rating)

Competency	Change
Describe hospice and palliative care	+0.48
Explain the hospice Interdisciplinary team	+1.15
Understand the scope and practice of an end of life doula	+1.20
Describe end of life and funeral options	+1.61
Sit with someone of different cultural, religious, or age background	+0.24
Facilitate an end-of-life planning conversation	+1.45
Provide active listening to someone with a serious illness or caregiver	+0.54
Initiate exploration of legacy tools	+1.90
Recognize your own limitations and professional boundaries	+0.50

## Key Insights

- **Most Improved Areas:**
  - Initiating exploration of legacy tools (+1.90)
  - Describing end of life and funeral options (+1.61)
  - Facilitating end-of-life planning conversations (+1.45)
- **High Baseline, Modest Gains:**  
Skills like **active listening** and **cultural sensitivity** started high and showed smaller improvements, suggesting participants were already confident in these areas.

# Curriculum

The Doula Model of Care	End-of-life and After-Death Options
Family Dynamics & Communication	Grief Literacy & Support
Caregiver Support Strategies	Legacy Work, Ceremony, Ritual
Companioning Techniques & Practical Tools	Boundaries & Ethical Considerations
Vigil Planning & Presence	<i>end</i> Notes

## Outcomes

- **For patients and families:** Enhanced Emotional and Spiritual Support, Continuity of Care, Improved End-of-Life Experience
- **For volunteers:** Specialized Training and Growth, Deepened Purpose and Connection, Peer Support and Community
- **For Partners In Care and the community:** Innovative Care Model, Stronger Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Expanded Service Capacity

# What a Doula Volunteer Is & Is Not

A hospice volunteer doula provides **non-medical, heart-centered support** to individuals nearing the end of life and their loved ones.

- Companionship
- Legacy & Life Review
- Family Support
- Vigil Planning & Bedside Presence

# What a Doula Volunteer Is & Is Not

While doulas are a vital part of the care team, there are **important boundaries to their role.**

- No Medical or Clinical Care
- No 24/7 availability
- No counseling or therapy
- No legal or financial advice

## A Year Later...

### Key learnings for cohort two

- Focus on patients whose family members also seek support
- Formalize intentional and regular collaboration with interdisciplinary team
- Strike balance of content vs sharing at monthly doula volunteer meetings
- Expect participants to feel they are not 'doula-ing'
- Revel in the trust, intimacy and connection within group



# End Notes



<https://thepeacefulpresenceproject.org/endnotes>

*Inspiring Compassion and Dignity*



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## Emotional Support

- ⦿ *Doula holds space for thoughtful, nonjudgmental exploration of MAID*
- ⦿ *Patient expressed appreciation for doula presence, noting it eased stress on her daughter and provided a safe space for her own concerns.*

## Practical Support

- ⦿ *Explored supportive technology to help friend communicate with her out-of-town son.*
- ⦿ *Reflected on aging, family dynamics, and the emotional weight of outliving children.*
- ⦿ *Reviewed POLST and expressed strong feelings about avoiding future hospitalizations.*
- ⦿ *Visited in hospital and scribed doctor's visits*






## Legacy & Joy!

- ⦿ *Monthly visits to local equine organization for horse-loving patient*
- ⦿ *Legacy project reflecting passion for music and performing at Grand Ole Opry*

## Doula Volunteer Excerpt



# Resources

-  **CO Daily (video and article): [Watch and Read](#)**
-  **Central Oregon Daily Article: [Read Article](#)**
-  **Hospice News (Top Story): [Read Feature](#)**
-  **Press Release 02272025 [Read Release](#)**
-  **[endnotes Planning Workbook](#)**
- **[The Peaceful Presence Project](#)**
- **[Partners In Care](#)**



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# QUESTIONS?