



# Fact Sheet

## DOULAS AND PREGNANT OFFENDERS

### **What is the average number of pregnant offenders committed to the Department of Corrections?**

Approximately 5.6% of female offenders are pregnant when they arrive at the Minnesota Correctional Facility Shakopee. Offenders enter the facility at all stages of pregnancy, and may give birth during incarceration, or be released to the community before giving birth.

### **How does the DOC become aware an offender is pregnant?**

All female offenders 60 years of age and under are tested for pregnancy upon arrival. Pregnant offenders meet with the MCF-Shakopee parenting coordinator who creates a birth plan, contacts the designated after-birth caregiver, and offers doula services.

### **What are doulas?**

Doulas are women trained to assist pregnant offenders during the childbirth process, and to provide prenatal education and birth planning. Informational and emotional support is also offered during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

### **What is the Minnesota Prison Doula Project (MNPDP)?**

MNPDP is a privately funded prison-based pregnancy, birth, and parenting program provided to incarcerated women at the MCF-Shakopee and some county jails. The program includes individualized support for expectant mothers, a mothering group facilitated by the doulas, support provided during birth, and the education and skills offenders need to be stronger, more connected mothers.

### **How many births has the MNPDP supported?**

Between July 2011 and June 2014, 39 births were supported by doulas. Only 4 of the 39 (10%) babies were born via cesarean section (all of which were scheduled, repeat C-sections), significantly lower than Minnesota's C-section delivery rate of 18% in 2012. Only one baby was born with a low-birth weight.

### **Are pregnant offenders given prenatal care?**

The DOC follows the same standards practiced in the community, and provides prenatal medical appointments, prenatal nutrition, and access to health services. Pregnant offenders are housed in the Parenting Unit.

## How does the process work?

During labor, the doula will meet the offender mother and corrections staff at the local hospital and remain with her throughout the labor, birth, and immediately postpartum. She is also present with the mother at the hospital during the time of separation from her baby, a difficult time for many incarcerated women. Following the birth and separation visit, the doula will meet with the mother at least twice in order to provide postpartum support after she has returned to the correctional facility.

## Will incarcerated pregnant offenders be restrained?

Correctional staff may not use restraints on a pregnant offender. The only exception is if restraints are absolutely necessary to prevent escape or injury. If restraints must be used, they must be the least restrictive type, and not touch the woman's abdomen, or cause risk to the mother or baby. Three days after the delivery, soft restraints are used. The offender will be restrained per normal procedures upon returning to the MCF-Shakopee.

## Are incarcerated mothers allowed to breastfeed or pump breast milk after birth?

If an offender chooses to breastfeed their newborn while in the hospital, they may do so. An offender may choose to pump within the facility to continue milk production, but the DOC does not allow storage or transportation of breast milk.

## What is the feedback from offenders who have used MNPDP?

After twelve weeks of group-based support and education, women reported significantly fewer depressive symptoms, more confidence as parents, and more support from other women at the prison and facility staff. Women who participate in the doula program typically report very high levels of satisfaction.

### Number of Deliveries by MCF-Shakopee Offenders Since 2009

Year	Births
2009	17
2010	16
2011	19
2012	5
2013	13
2014	22
YTD - 2015	12
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<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>

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