



DPH Doula Certification Program–Complaint Process Overview

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Doula Certification Program (“Program”) is committed to protecting the health, safety, and rights of birthing people and supporting the professionalism and integrity of Certified Doulas. The Program reviews complaints to ensure that DPH Certified Doulas uphold state standards, ethical guidelines, and the expectations of the Doula Certification Program.

This document provides an overview of what types of complaints may be reviewed, how to submit a complaint, and the range of potential outcomes. It is intended for birthing people, community members, doulas, and partner organizations.

1. Who may file a complaint

Any person or entity may submit a complaint if they believe that a Certified Doula has violated the standards of the Doula Certification Program. This includes:

- birthing people,
- family members,
- community members,
- health care providers,
- doulas,
- other birthworkers,
- and organizations.

2. How to submit a complaint

Complaints must be submitted to: DPH-Doulas@mass.gov. Please include the following in the email:

- Subject title: Doula Certification Program Complaint Submission
- Following information in detail:
 - Date(s) of occurrence (or range)
 - What happened, in your own words (who was involved, where)
 - The name of the Certified Doula (Respondent) and any witnesses (if known)
 - Any documents or screenshots you wish us to consider



Please **do not** include sensitive personal information, such as medical records, Social Security numbers, or other highly confidential data, in your submission. Please note that information submitted may be subject to disclosure under Massachusetts public records law, and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. You may learn more information about public records on [this website](#).

Anonymous complaints are generally discouraged, however may be considered at the Program's discretion.

3. What the program can review

The Program evaluates complaints involving conduct that may violate certification requirements or Doula Code of Conduct, including but not limited to:

- Negligence
- Practice beyond the scope of practice
- Fraud, misrepresentation, or deceptive practices
- Practicing while impaired by alcohol or drugs
- Sexual misconduct

The Program does not review conduct that does not involve a potential violation of the Doula Code of Conduct, including but not limited to:

- Clinical decisions made by doctors, nurses, or hospitals
- Birth outcomes (such as cesarean delivery) that are not connected to a doula's conduct
- Dissatisfaction based solely on personality differences or care preferences

4. What happens after a complaint is submitted

DPH reviews each complaint to determine whether it falls within the scope of the Doula Certification Program. Some complaints may be closed without action if they do not involve a potential violation of the Doula Code of Conduct or fall outside DPH's authority. DPH may find a complaint valid (substantiated) if an investigation shows that it is more likely than not the Certified Doula violated the doula certification requirements or Doula Code of Conduct.



5. Possible outcomes

If a complaint is substantiated, the Program may take the following action(s):

- Issuance of a warning
- Remediation plan
- Correction order
- Suspension
- Revocation of certification

6. Final decision and oversight

The Certified Doula will be notified in writing of:

- any action taken,
- the reasons for the decision, and
- the specific part(s) of the Doula Code of Conduct related to the action.

7. Doula's right to appeal

Certified Doulas have the right to appeal disciplinary actions. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 calendar days of receipt of the Department's written notice.

8. Complaints about other health care providers

Complaints about other licensed health care professionals are not reviewed through the Doula Certification Program. To submit a complaint about a health care professional or facility, visit the [File a complaint against a health care professional or facility website](#).

If you are a doula seeking more information about your rights during a complaint investigation, please refer to the Section 3. Complaints, Investigations, Agency Action of [Doula Certification Program Guidelines](#).