Brightwater Birth Support — Business Plan

Doula in Sacramento, CA · Startup plan

Executive summary

Brightwater Birth Support is a new doula business in Sacramento, CA offering birth doula package: prenatal visits, labor and follow-up; postpartum doula support by the hour or in packages; virtual prenatal visits and birth planning; support for families enrolled in Medicaid; and childbirth education classes for small groups. The model is one independent doula with a monthly cap on births, a backup doula agreed for every due date, and a mix of private clients and families whose care is paid for by Medicaid.

Startup budget: $4,853 across 9 items, funded from savings. Target: $4,500 in monthly sales.

Twelve months from now, success looks like this: Three births a month booked a season ahead, a postpartum client every month, and a backup doula agreed for every due date

Products and services

Brightwater Birth Support's core service is birth doula package: prenatal visits, labor and follow-up. Every client signs a written contract that states the prenatal visits, the on-call window from about 37 weeks, the labor support, the follow-up and the backup plan, and every visit stays non-medical — comfort, information and advocacy.

- Birth doula package: prenatal visits, labor and follow-up
- Postpartum doula support by the hour or in packages
- Virtual prenatal visits and birth planning
- Support for families enrolled in Medicaid
- Childbirth education classes for small groups

Market analysis

The clients are first-time parents who want an experienced person in the room, parents planning a birth after a difficult one, families enrolled in Medicaid where it now covers doula care, and new parents who want hands-on help at home in the first weeks.

- First-time parents who want someone experienced in the room and a calm plan for labor
- Parents planning a birth after a previous difficult one, or a vaginal birth after a cesarean
- Families enrolled in Medicaid in states where it now covers doula care
- New parents who want hands-on help at home in the first weeks after the birth
- Clients referred by midwives, obstetric practices, lactation consultants and past clients

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Marketing strategy

Most clients find a doula through word of mouth and on Google — they search for a doula in their city, compare the Google Business Profile, the reviews and the packages on the website, and book a free consultation. Referrals from midwives, obstetric practices and lactation consultants bring steady introductions, and the state's Medicaid doula directory brings families whose care the program pays for.

- Google Business Profile and Google — “doula near me” and “birth doula” plus your city
- A website with your packages, prices, what's included and a way to book a free consultation
- Referrals from midwives, obstetric practices, childbirth educators and lactation consultants
- Your state's Medicaid doula directory and the health plans' provider lists, where your state covers doulas
- Word of mouth from past clients — the trade's strongest channel — and reviews that describe the birth

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Operations plan

The doula runs the practice alone with a backup arrangement: a monthly cap on births, a written contract and deposit for every client, an on-call window from about 37 weeks, client records kept private, and Medicaid claims filed promptly after each visit and birth.

- A written contract for every client covering what's included, the on-call window, the fees and the backup plan
- An on-call window from about 37 weeks, with a backup doula agreed for every due date
- A booking limit of births per month you can actually attend, so two labors rarely collide
- Deposits taken at signing and the balance due before the on-call window opens
- Scope kept non-medical — comfort, information and advocacy, never clinical care or advice
- Client records kept private to the standard your Medicaid enrollment requires

Startup costs

What it will take to open the doors, funded from savings.

Startup costs

ITEM	AMOUNT
Birth doula training and certification	$900
Adult and infant CPR certification	$85
Doula professional and general liability insurance (first year)	$550
Birth bag: comfort tools, a rebozo, massage tools and supplies	$300
Working capital: running costs until the first births pay	$2,500
Website with your packages, prices and a consultation booking	$0
Consultation booking, contracts, invoices and deposits (first year)	$0
Business registration, LLC and EIN	$268
Business cards and cards for midwives' and practices' waiting rooms	$250
Total	**$4,853**

Typical range to start a doula business in the US: $2,085–$10,720. Your list is what you decided to spend — replace estimates with real quotes as you get them. Website with your packages, prices and a consultation booking: Your Zarla plan includes the website — your packages, prices, what's included and a consultation booking — and walks you through your Google Business Profile; a designer typically charges $2,000 or more to build one. Consultation booking, contracts, invoices and deposits (first year): Booking, invoicing and a client list come with your Zarla plan; e-signature for contracts and Medicaid claims software are separate.

Financial plan

The numbers below come from your own startup list and typical monthly costs for an independent doula in the US. Startup costs are small; the real constraint is how many births a month you can attend, so the plan turns on births a month, the fee or Medicaid rate per birth, and postpartum hours that don't depend on a due date.

Typical monthly operating costs for a doula business: $220–$1,720 a month, before the owner's own pay.

At $4,500 in monthly sales, Brightwater Birth Support would clear $2,780–$4,280 a month before owner pay and tax, and recover the $4,853 startup budget in roughly 2 months.

Typical monthly operating costs

COST	TYPICAL RANGE
Mileage and parking for visits and births	$50–$300
Backup doula fees and childcare while you're on call	$0–$600
Doula liability insurance	$25–$70
Phone and a reliable on-call line	$50–$120
Booking, invoicing and a client list (included with Zarla)	$0–$30
Card processing fees, about 3% of what clients pay by card	$30–$150
Google Business Profile photos, printed cards and referral thank-yous	$25–$200
Continuing education and certification renewal, spread by month	$10–$50
Bookkeeping, accounting and Medicaid claims help	$30–$200

US ranges for a small operation; replace with your own figures as you learn them. Lines marked (included with Zarla) are what those tools cost separately — with Zarla they are part of one monthly plan.

Risks and honest downsides

Every doula business plan should say out loud what can go wrong. For Brightwater Birth Support, the real risks are:

- Births don't keep a calendar: two labors on the same night, or a birth during a family emergency, need a backup doula already agreed
- Being on call for weeks at a time is hard on sleep, family and any second job
- Income is lumpy — fees arrive by birth, and Medicaid claims can take weeks to pay
- A birth that goes differently from the plan can leave a client unhappy with the doula, so the contract and scope have to be clear up front
- Medicaid rates and rules change with each state's budget, so a plan built only on Medicaid clients carries policy risk
- Hospital visitor or support-person rules can change quickly, as they did in 2020

Licenses, permits and insurance

What Brightwater Birth Support needs before it can legally trade in the US. Rules vary by state and city — confirm each item with your local licensing office and an accountant.

- State Medicaid enrollment, if you take Medicaid clients — More than half of US states, plus Washington, DC, now cover doula care through Medicaid, and each sets its own enrollment rules. California's Medi-Cal, for example, asks that you be 18 or older, hold adult and infant CPR certification, complete basic HIPAA training, and either finish 16 hours of doula training and attend three births or show five years of doula work in the last seven. Check your own state's Medicaid program and its health plans before you advertise that you take Medicaid.
- A National Provider Identifier (NPI) for Medicaid and insurance billing — Free from the federal NPPES system in the US, and required before any Medicaid program or health plan can pay you. Apply once; it stays with you if you move.
- Business registration and EIN — Many independent doulas in the US form an LLC; state filing fees run about $35 to $500. The EIN from the IRS is free.
- No state license to practice as a doula in the US — No US state licenses doulas: private clients can hire any doula, and certification (DONA International and others) is voluntary. Doula care is non-medical in every state — comfort, information and advocacy, never clinical care — and some hospitals set their own rules for who may attend a birth.

Milestones: the next 30 days

The first month's to-do list for Brightwater Birth Support, in order:

- Finish your training and book the births your certification or your state's Medicaid program needs
- Get your adult and infant CPR card and complete basic HIPAA training
- Register the business, take the free EIN and apply for your free NPI
- Buy doula liability insurance
- Write your contract and set your packages from what experienced doulas near you charge
- Agree a backup arrangement with another doula
- Put your website live with your packages, prices and a consultation booking
- Claim your free Google Business Profile, then introduce yourself to three midwives or obstetric practices
- Check whether your state's Medicaid covers doula care and start the enrollment if it does

Appendix: what a lender will ask for

This plan tells the story and shows the numbers. If you take it to a bank, expect to be asked for these documents as well:

- Two years of personal tax returns and a personal financial statement
- A month-by-month 12-month cash-flow projection built from births a month, your fee and when each payment arrives
- Your training and certification records, CPR card and proof of liability insurance
- Your NPI and your state Medicaid enrollment, if you have one
- Your client contract and your booked due dates
- Your credit report