



CORNERSTONE

Cornerstone Doula Trainings Code of Conduct

Your role as a Cornerstone Birthworker*, Doula, Birthkeeper, Full Spectrum Reproductive Support Specialist: Cornerstone Birthworkers are reproductive health support professionals who provide continuous physical, emotional and educational support to all birthing people and gestational carriers, their partners, families and communities throughout the reproductive lifespan. Cornerstone Full-Spectrum Birthworkers serve clients and community through all reproductive circumstances including fertility, live birth, loss, abortion, foster & CPS systems involvement and adoption. Our Birthworkers activate community for shift help, advanced advocacy and donations, etc. when circumstances require. Cornerstone Birthworkers also take care of each other so that they can thrive and continue to serve clients and community in the long-term. Cornerstone defines birthwork as community supporting, human rights work. Cornerstone Birthworkers are advocates and change makers who work as an integral part of the interprofessional reproductive care team, and are not disempowered by systems of hierarchy and control. There is a maternal health crisis happening here in the US that is only getting worse. Cornerstone is committed to closing the gap in disparate maternal morbidity and mortality rates through our collective work and activism as leaders, educators, Birthworkers, Doulas and Birthkeepers.

As Cornerstone Birthworkers, we **fully commit** to:

- **Doing the work.** The internal work of anti-racism and anti-oppression is a lifelong action; every single action, every single day. Though we will facilitate this work externally in our trainings, your *inner* work is a lifetime project. Cornerstone expects that our students, Birthworkers and Birthkeepers will fully commit to identifying and deconstructing internal biases and racism, as well as interrupting discrimination and holding racist systems accountable in order to create true change in the disparate maternal and infant morbidity and mortality rates in the US.
- **Uplift those with less privilege,** “Speak up, lift up, fall back.”(Jenkins, Gomez, Harper & Romero, 2016) Cornerstone Birth Workers must examine their positionality through an intersectional lens and actively leverage their privilege intentionally and equitably. If you have more privilege than a colleague, client or community member in relation to gender, sex, race, class, ability, age, education level, socioeconomic status, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc., step back, uplift and pass the mic. Some ways to engage in this way are citing BIPOC researchers and educators, paying POC educators for their intellectual property, time, energy and labor, compensating mentors, referring a potential client to a more culturally appropriate Birthworker colleague, not occupying POC-only spaces as a white person, not relying on marginalized folks for emotional labor and

* For the purpose of clarity and continuity within this document, The title “Birthworker” will be used and known as synonymous with all other titles pertaining to Cornerstone Students & Graduates of any and all Cornerstone trainings.

education, interrupting microaggressions and speaking out whenever you witness marginalization, racism and oppression.

- **Uphold the tenets of reproductive justice:** Reproductive Justice is a framework that was created and developed in the 1990's by Black women, therefore Cornerstone as an organization with white leaders does not call itself a Reproductive Justice organization. We do however, work within the framework, uphold its tenets in our classrooms and communities, and give credit and thanks to its creators and developers. "Sistersong defines Reproductive Justice as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities... To achieve reproductive justice we must analyze power systems, address intersecting oppressions, center the most marginalized and join together across issues and identities."("Reproductive Justice", 2019)
- **Not appropriate cultural practices and traditions:** Cultural appropriation can be defined as when someone who is a member of a dominant culture or group takes a cultural tradition or tool from a marginalized or oppressed group to use as their own. The appropriator does not receive this tradition or tool as a gift from a member of the group that it belongs, and uses the tradition or tool for profit or benefit. Cultural appropriation is present when there is a power imbalance. Cultural exchange is not cultural appropriation, as there is no oppressor/oppressed power dynamic, therefore the practice of cultural exchange does not go against our code of conduct.
- **Respect diversity of practice, skill and knowledge in our Birthworker, Doula and Birthkeeper communities (both online and IRL):** We are a diverse community. And in diversity, there are many different beliefs, backgrounds, expertise, bodies of knowledge and ways of practice. Cornerstone Birthworkers understand that there is just as much weight behind traditional and ancestral knowledge and practice than that of science and evidence-based data. Cornerstone Birthworkers will engage in respectful, nonviolent communication in all spaces, uplift one another and listen and learn as much as we teach.
- **Ethical online engagement:** Name calling, trolling, harassment, violent and/or disrespectful behavior toward a colleague or community member in our online spaces will be grounds for removal from said space and revocation of Cornerstone certification.
- **Honor choice:** Cornerstone Birthworkers embrace all reproductive choice with utmost respect. Every person has full autonomy and ownership of their body, their baby and their birth.
- **Provide continuity of care:** Cornerstone Birthworkers are 100% committed to each family they work with and make sure that they are available for every birth by not over-scheduling and by following our 36-43 week **hard call** practice guidelines. In the rare case of an emergency or the not so rare case of needing to take care of oneself, Cornerstone Birthworkers always have a backup ready to step-in that their clients have already met and feel comfortable with prior to labor.
- **Practice confidentiality:** All information gathered by Cornerstone Birthworkers about clients and their family members are kept strictly confidential. At no time will a Cornerstone Birthworker release any PHI (Protected Health Information) without explicit

written consent by the client, such as medical diagnoses, medical histories, prescriptions, personal histories, birth stories, photos, names, addresses or any other identifying data. The relationship between Birthworker and client is sacred and must be held in the highest regard and confidence.

- **Provide equitable care:** Understanding that the intersections of a person's multiple identities can translate to compounding oppressions and deep chasms in lack of access, Cornerstone Birthworkers provide equitable care, rather than equal care. What this means is that we meet every individual client and their families where they are, providing or referring out to the supports and resources that each client and family needs to have true access to just, respectful, supportive and gratifying care throughout their time working with their Birthworker, Doula Birthkeeper or Full Spectrum Reproductive Specialist and beyond. Boiled down, this means that no matter how identities vary, access and quality of care do not.
- **Practice self care:** Self care is an ongoing *practice* of everyday life, not just a single action to mitigate stress from a traumatic episode or experience. Cornerstone Birthworkers give to themselves as much as they give to their clients and communities. Further, Cornerstone Birthworkers commit to a constant practice of strengthening both personal and community resilience. Resilience can be defined as both an inherent trait and a learned skill that promotes recovery from stress or adverse events. The three key components of resilience are recovery, sustainability and growth. Recovery is a measurement of how we "bounce back" from an adverse event or stressor, sustainability is how long the positive state of having bounced back lasts, and growth can be defined as having learned and improved from the adverse event or stressor. Moving even further beyond resilience, the notion of thriving is what Cornerstone is incredibly committed to promoting for the Birthworker, Birthkeeper professions. If you can imagine that survival is merely continuing to stay alive within conditions that are stressful or adverse, and resilience is being able to bounce back from these events, *thriving* is a state of continually transforming and innovating oneself through and because of these stressors and adversity. Thriving **demands** a self-care practice -- that we take pause often, we get enough rest, we say yes *and* no when appropriate, we connect with community, we feed our purpose and passions, we eat nourishing foods, we breathe deep, we move our bodies, we take breaks and we care for one another meaningfully.
- **Practice community care:** Birth work is so much more than one-on-one engagement with families. We have the expectation that Cornerstone Birthworkers, Doulas, Birthkeepers will build community with one another, as well as with their neighbors and communities outside of the Cornerstone world. Further, we encourage Cornerstone Birthworkers to engage with and support communities being built and uplifted by other Doula, birthwork & Reproductive Justice groups and organizations.
- **Provide trauma informed care:** "Trauma Informed Care is a strengths-based service delivery approach that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment." (Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010, p.82) Cornerstone

Birthworkers commit to embodying a trauma informed approach in all interactions with clients, their families and communities. This means approaching all clients with the assumption that they are survivors of trauma, offering a safe physical and emotional space for all people they work with, advocating for clients in all settings, holding self and providers accountable for receiving explicit consent before performing any client or patient care, having tools to support clients when they are experiencing triggers, understanding personal triggers and having tools to mitigate them, and always working under the awareness that oppression and power are compounding factors in traumatic events and responses.

This document outlines the expectations and standards that Cornerstone Doula Trainings hold for every person who enters our classroom, whether the student becomes certified or not. This document is subject to changes and updates, and if said updates are added or changes made we will ask for a new signature on an updated document. If you plan to become certified through Cornerstone Doula Trainings, you will also be asked to complete all certification requirements and keep infant and child CPR/first aid certification current. We will conduct certification audits from time to time to ensure that all certified Birthworkers, Doulas, and Birthkeepers are up to date on their requirements.

By signing this document, you are making a commitment to practice as a Birthworker, Doula, Full Spectrum Reproductive Specialist, Birthkeeper (or your own chosen title) under the guidelines of this code of conduct. Cornerstone Doula Trainings reserves the right to terminate professional alliances with Birthworkers, Doulas, Birthkeepers, Full Spectrum Reproductive Specialists, (fill in your own chosen title) as well as revoke certifications from those who do not practice at the level of these standards.

Signed: _____

Name printed: _____

Date: _____

References:

Hopper, E. K., Bassuk, E. L., & Olivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the storm: Trauma-informed care in homeless service settings. *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, 3, 80-100.

Jenkins, J., Gomez, R., Harper, L., & Romero, A. (2016, November 8). Speak up, lift up, fall back: What we need from social justice allies. Retrieved from <https://diverseeducation.com/article/89078/>

Reproductive Justice. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

GRIEVANCE AND INCIDENT PROCEDURE

INCIDENT REVIEW

An Incident is any potentially negative occurrence arising in a support situation, as well as between Birthworkers, which involve a Cornerstone Birthworker. The Cornerstone Birthworker or anyone else directly involved in or witnessing the occurrence may report an incident. The purpose of an Incident Review is to discover facts and to provide support, advice, and correction as appropriate.

GRIEVANCE

A grievance is a complaint arising from a support situation lodged by a client, partner, caregiver, community member, birthworker, provider or nurse against a Cornerstone Birthworker. The purpose of the Grievance Procedure is to provide a vehicle through which a complaint may be brought, a fair and complete investigation undertaken, and appropriate action/s taken.

- **Grievance Review Committee Gathering:** The Grievance Review Committee is made up of 3 Cornerstone Birthworkers and two members from the Cornerstone Leadership team.
- **Process:** Any written documentation of the grievance is gathered and assembled, then a time is set when all parties can review the situation. The Birthworker in question has the option to attend the meeting, as this will be their chance to respond to the grievance. The Grievance Committee discusses the circumstances, asks questions, evaluates the situation, makes recommendations, and initiates change when appropriate. All of this information is kept completely confidential and within the committee's session.

Involved parties (client, caregiver, birth worker) will be notified by the Grievance Committee of the findings of the committee in writing and will be informed of any actions resulting within 30 days of the determination.

- **Sanctions:** The Birthworker may be offered the opportunity to complete educational assignments, participate in a restorative justice circle, be given the option to resign or may have certification immediately revoked** if the situation cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the aforementioned options.
- **Appeals Process:** The person receiving the sanction may submit an appeal in writing to the Leadership Team within 72 hours of receiving their sanctions. The team will review the appeal and respond within 5 business days with a final decision.

**Automatic revocation without a grievance procedure is permissible at the Leadership Team's discretion when the Leadership Team has been made aware that a Birthworker is not honoring the Cornerstone Code of Conduct.