

TEAMBIRTH

# TeamBirth Training Package For Doulas



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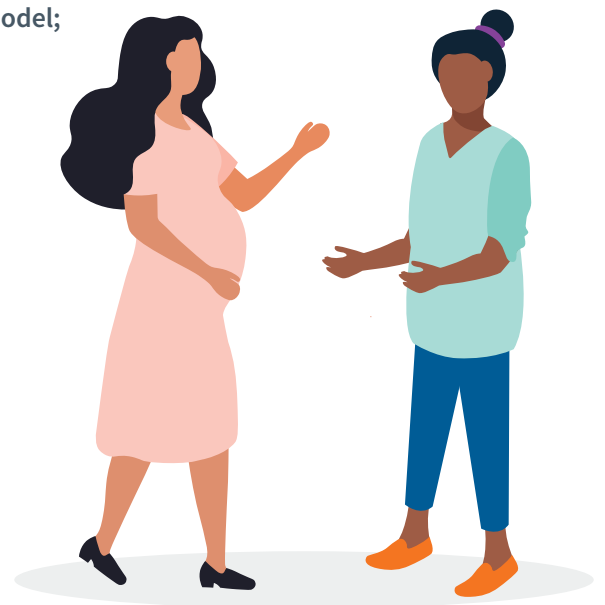
People giving birth in the U.S. face higher rates of mistreatment, serious complications, and maternal death than those in any other high-income country—with risks that are disproportionately higher for Black and Indigenous birthing people. Yet most of these adverse outcomes are preventable with stronger systems of care.

A major driver of preventable harm is poor communication and teamwork: 80–90% of cases involving patient harm cite failures in these areas. TeamBirth seeks to address this gap by structuring communication and decision-making so that every patient is heard, respected, and actively included in decisions about their care. [Evidence](#) finds that experiencing TeamBirth leads to significantly higher levels of patient autonomy during childbirth.

Within TeamBirth, doulas are recognized as key team members. Thus, this training aims to equip doulas to work effectively within the model by:

- Providing a brief overview of the TeamBirth model;
- Defining their role and how to participate in TeamBirth; and
- Offering tools to support clients, facilitate collaboration with clinical teams, and navigate common challenges

**Who should take this training?** Any doula who currently or plans to serve clients in a TeamBirth hospital or doulas interested in applying TeamBirth principles and practices in other settings. If you are interested in bringing TeamBirth to your community, please feel free to contact us [HERE](#).



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**SECTION GOAL:** Provide a brief overview of the TeamBirth model.

# What is TeamBirth?

TeamBirth is a patient-centered care model designed to enhance communication, teamwork, and shared decision-making during labor and birth. It includes two core components that are integral to the model’s success across the maternal health continuum.

## 1. STRUCTURED TEAM HUDDLES

Structured conversations at the bedside that include all team members, including the birthing person and their support people

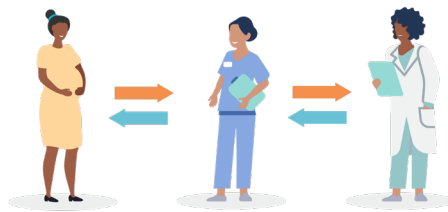


## 2. SHARED PLANNING TOOL

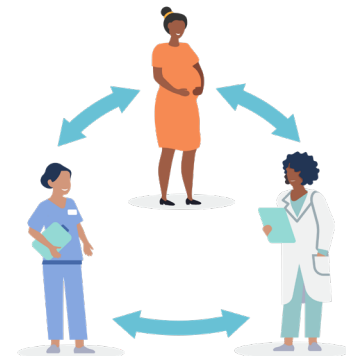
Visual tool that structures communication and provides space to document discussions during huddles

The TeamBirth model facilitates structured communication and input from all team members and helps the team arrive at shared plans together, with the goal of benefiting everyone involved.

- **For patients and their support people,** TeamBirth invites them into the conversations and provides a structure that is easy to understand and participate in.
- TeamBirth can help **doulas** amplify their client's voice in decision-making and facilitate communication between their clients and the clinical team.
- **For clinicians,** TeamBirth encourages trust and clarity of care plan to promote alignment and effective team communication across the full team.



**COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:  
COMMON**



**COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:  
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## TeamBirth Huddles: What to Expect

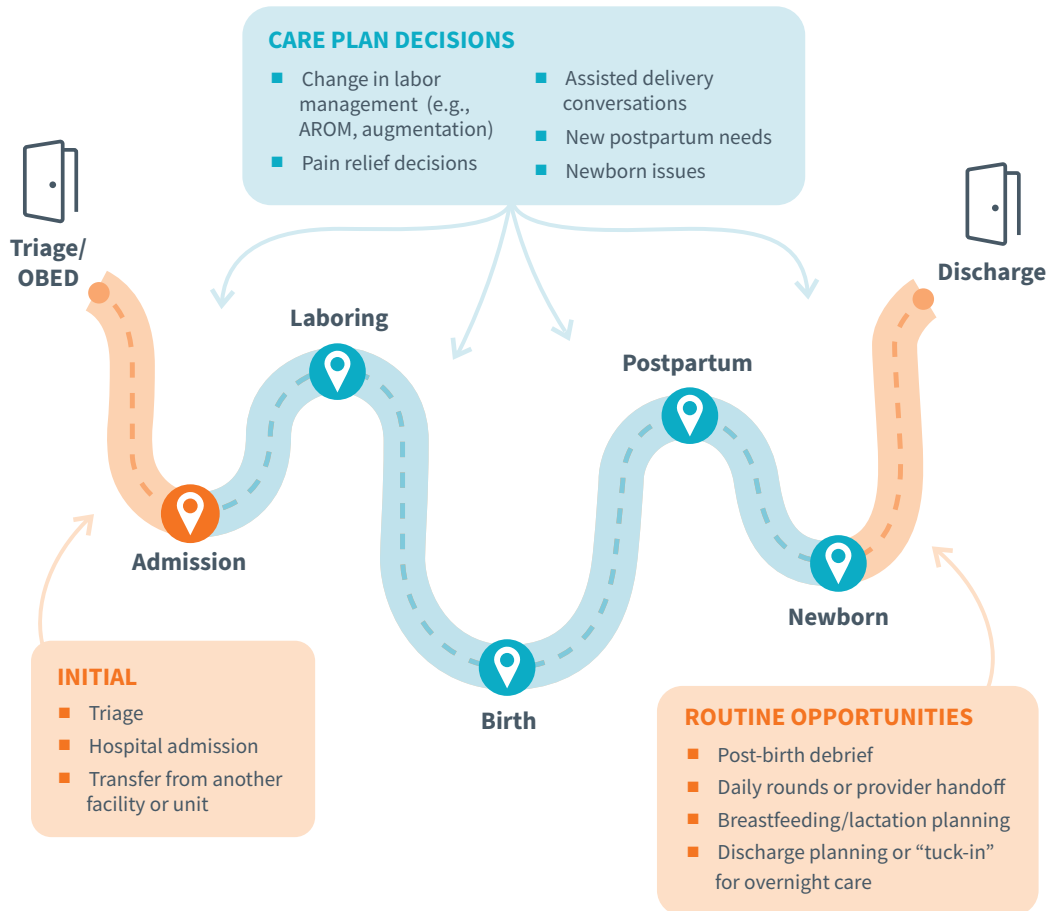
**Who participates in huddles?** Huddles should include the patient, their support person(s), doula and all clinical team members relevant to the current plan of care being discussed.



**Where do huddles occur?** Huddles occur at the bedside in the patient’s room. If the provider or doula are not able to be there in person, participation via speakerphone is a great alternative.

**Who can call a huddle?** Any team member can call a huddle, including you as a doula (see When to Huddle).

**When should huddles occur?** Huddles can occur at various points during the hospital stay, including upon admission, during labor, birth, postpartum, for newborn concerns, and before discharge. Below are key moments that can spark a TeamBirth huddle.



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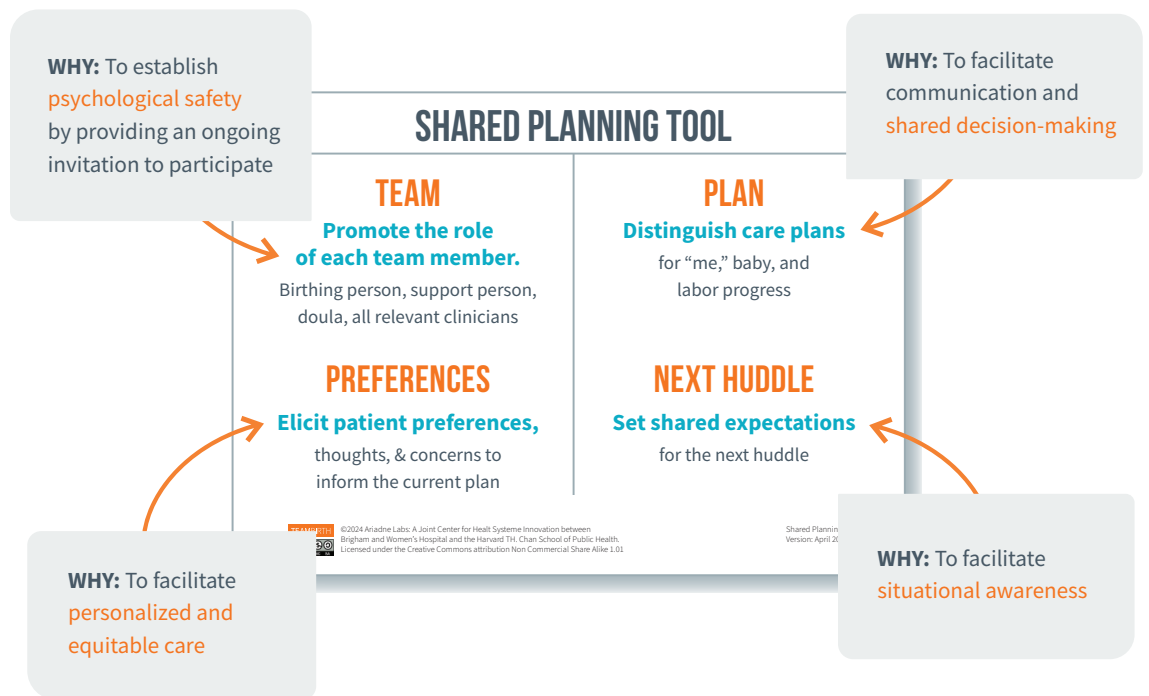
## Shared Planning Tool: What to Expect

**What gets written on the shared planning tool?** During huddles, the basic board sections (Team, Preferences, Plan, and Next Huddle) are updated in patient friendly language.

**Who writes on the board?** This is flexible! The nurse, doula, or support person can support with writing on the board.

**Are all the sections always filled out?** Ideally, all sections of the board are filled out and updated as applicable during each huddle.

**What is the purpose of each section of the board?** Each section of the board has a key behavior and purpose (see below).



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# TeamBirth Discussion Guides

TeamBirth also includes three optional, add-on discussion guides to support shared decision-making during admission to the hospital, for labor support, and in discussions about assisted delivery. All guides are available in multiple languages ([see all downloadable guides here](#)). Note that not all TeamBirth hospitals use or have the guides printed.

**Admission Discussion Guide**

Discuss the best next steps with your support person, your nurse, and your provider based on how you are doing, how your baby is doing, and how your labor is progressing.

<p>If you are in <b>Early labor*</b></p> <p>You may benefit from <b>Comfort</b></p> <p>Control of your environment</p> <p>Home</p>	<p>or</p> <p>You may benefit from <b>Being active</b></p> <p>Staying close to hospital</p> <p>Near the Hospital</p>	<p>If you are in <b>Active labor*</b></p> <p>You may benefit from <b>Monitoring</b></p> <p>Clinical care</p> <p>Labor &amp; Delivery</p>
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**DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEAM**  
How am I doing?  
How is my baby doing?  
Where am I in labor?

**DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEAM**  
What are the benefits and risks of each option?

**DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEAM**  
What can I do to be more comfortable?  
When can I go nearby?  
What are my options for labor support?

\* The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) defines labor as contractions that result in cervical change. Active labor typically begins at 4 cm with accelerated cervical dilation.

## Admission Discussion Guide

- Facilitates communication between patients and their care teams during the admission process
- Helps clarify the reason for admission and supports alignment on next steps

*\*Intended for individuals in spontaneous labor without a medical indication for admission related to maternal or fetal health.*

**Labor Support Guide**

Use this guide to identify, discuss, and select options for labor support with your team.

What are your care goals?	What options can you try yourself?	What options can you try with your team?
<p><b>ME</b></p> <p>Support labor</p> <p>☐ Movement: Change positions, walk, or move</p> <p>☐ Breathing: Use deep breaths or use relaxation methods</p> <p>☐ Temperature: Use massage, heating, or cooling</p> <p>☐ Temperature: Apply heat or cold with water or packs</p> <p>☐ Environment: Use light, smells, or sounds to create a comfortable space</p> <p>☐ Drink: Have tea, chips, water, juice, or other drink</p> <p>☐ Other:</p>	<p>☐ Medication: Start or change medications for your condition</p> <p>☐ Medication: Start or change medications for your condition</p>	
<p><b>BABY</b></p> <p>Manage wellbeing</p> <p>☐ Repletion: Lay on your side</p> <p>☐ Other:</p>	<p>☐ Medication: Start or change medications for your condition</p> <p>☐ Medication: Start or change medications for your condition</p>	
<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <p>Promote progress</p> <p>☐ Movement: Change positions, walk, or move</p> <p>☐ Breathing: Take deep breaths or use relaxation methods</p> <p>☐ Tools: Use labor support tools, like a birth ball</p> <p>☐ Other:</p>	<p>☐ Medication: Start or change medications for your condition</p> <p>☐ Medication: Start or change medications for your condition</p>	

## Labor Support Guide

- Identifies comfort and support options available during labor
- Encourages collaborative planning between the patient, their support person(s), doula, and clinical team

**Assisted Delivery Discussion Guide**

Use this guide in team discussions about assisted vaginal delivery or C-section. Assisted delivery may be appropriate if your condition meets these criteria, but **discuss with your team what is best for you and your baby** (see Labor Support Guide for options).

What are your reasons for considering assisted delivery?	What are the MINIMUM conditions for assisted delivery*?
<p><b>ME</b></p> <p>Request</p> <p>☐ You believe that assisted delivery is the best option for you after discussion with your care team</p>	<p>☐ On-going slow heart rate OR</p> <p>☐ Far away from delivery with either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Repeated slowdowns in heart rate that do not improve with support</li> <li>☐ High heart rate that does not improve with support</li> </ul>
<p><b>BABY</b></p> <p>Concerns about wellbeing</p> <p>☐ Slow induction</p> <p>☐ Early labor (6 cm or less) for 34 hours or more</p> <p>☐ Medications to support contractions and waters broken for at least 12-18 hours or more</p>	<p>☐ No cervical change with waters broken and 6 cm or more dilated with either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Good contractions for 4 hours or more</li> <li>☐ Medications to support contractions for 6 hours or more</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROGRESS</b></p> <p>Slow progress</p> <p>☐ Prolonged pushing without progress</p> <p>☐ Pushing for at least 3 hours if this is your first labor or progress</p> <p>☐ Pushing for at least 2 hours if you have labored before</p>	<p>☐ Medications to support contractions and waters broken for at least 12-18 hours or more</p>

\* Minimum conditions based on ACOG and SFMN Obstetric Care Consensus on Safe Prevention of the Primary Cesarean Delivery

## Assisted Delivery Guide

- Supports conversations when an assisted (e.g., vacuum or forceps) or cesarean delivery may be considered
- Outlines ACOG's minimum conditions and methods for assisted delivery to promote shared understanding

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**SECTION GOAL:** Define the doula’s role and how to participate in TeamBirth.

# Role of Doulas in TeamBirth

As a doula, you can help ensure that your client’s preferences and concerns are clearly communicated during huddles and documented on the Shared Planning Tool. Below is additional information for how you can participate in TeamBirth’s core components.

## Participating in Huddles

### How to Participate

- Offer to:**
  - Use the whiteboard marker and write on the board
  - Encourage discussion about what’s most important to the client during the huddle to ensure care plans are aligned with preferences
- Ask:**
  - “Would now be a good time for a TeamBirth huddle?”
- Suggest:**
  - “It sounds like labor progress is being evaluated and a change in the plan being considered. Could we have a TeamBirth huddle so we can discuss options together?”

### Tools for Your Doula Bag

- When to Huddle: [A Doula’s Guide to Sparking the Conversation](#)
- Bring a dry erase marker with you in your doula bag!



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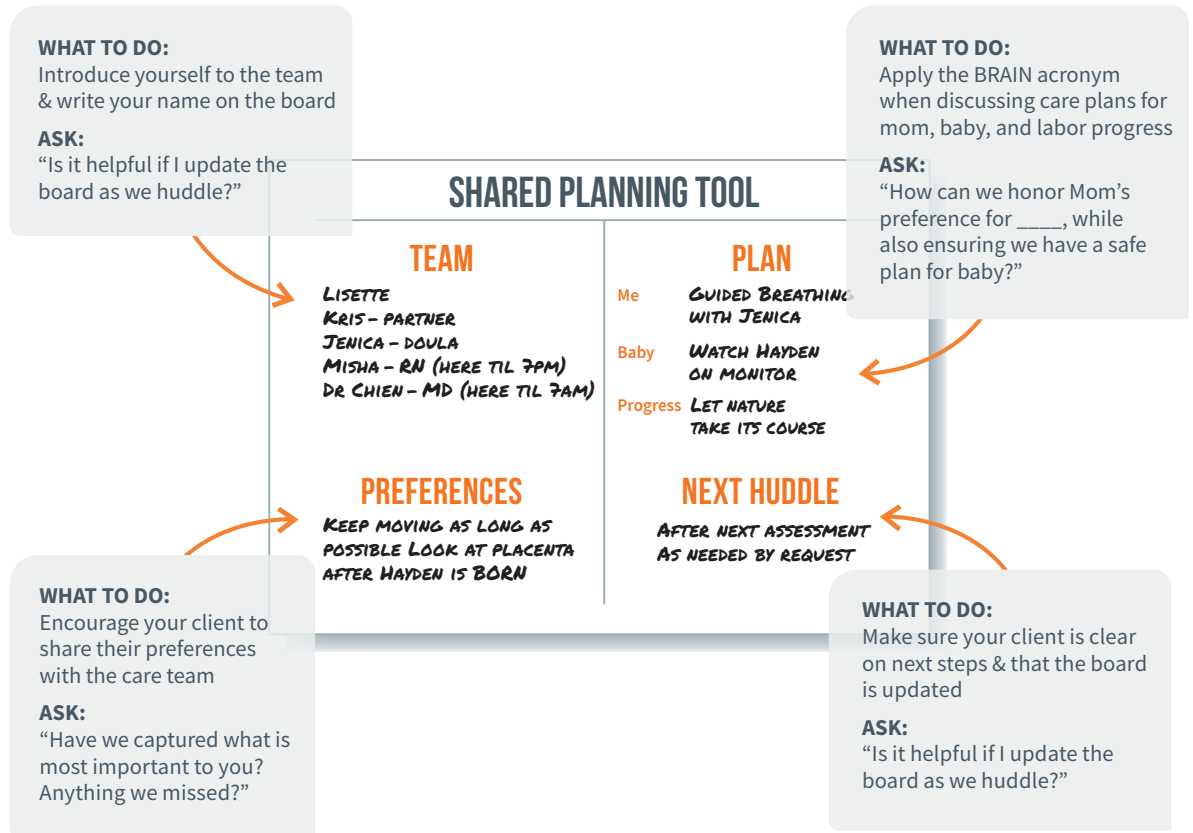
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## Engaging with the Shared Planning Tool

### How to Participate



### Other Considerations/Tips

The admission huddle is a great time to review your client’s birth plan/vision with the clinical team. Key items from the birth plan can be included on the board.

### Tools for Your Doula Bag

- TeamBirth Doula [Elevator Pitch & Quick Reference Sheet](#)
- [Common Preferences Wordbank & Birth Preferences Guide](#)



**TIP:** Birth plans frequently include more information than needs to be listed on the board, but that does not mean that it’s not important! Ask the clinical team where a good place to keep a copy of the birth plan would be so that they can reference it as needed.

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## Using the Discussion Guides

All three discussion guides help facilitate shared decision making, minimize implicit bias, and support transparency and respectful care. In case hospitals don't have them printed, remember to pack your own copies in your doula bag.

### Admission Discussion Guide [\[download the PDF\]](#)

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**Scenario:** Your client has just arrived at the hospital in spontaneous early labor. She's feeling a bit anxious and unsure what to expect. The room is busy, and she hasn't yet had a chance to share her preferences with the clinical team.

**Why Use the Tool:** The Admission Discussion Guide helps assess how the client, their baby, and labor progress is doing to determine indicators for admission.

#### Doula Action Steps

- If at a TeamBirth hospital, ask if they have printed guides available. If not, use your own and share with the clinical team.
- Suggest use of the guide during OB triage.
- Use the guide to prompt a conversation about how labor is progressing and what's most important to the client.

**What to Say:** "Can we look at this Labor Support Guide together to see if there are other support measures we might consider trying?"

### Labor Support Guide [\[download the PDF\]](#)

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**Scenario:** Your client is now in active labor and is starting to feel overwhelmed by her contractions. She originally preferred to avoid an epidural but is now reconsidering. She appears tense and uncertain.

**Why Use the Tool:** The Labor Support Guide helps everyone align on how labor is progressing and provides medical and non-medical options for pain management and comfort strategies.

#### Doula Action Steps

- If at a TeamBirth hospital, ask if they have printed guides available.
- Bring the Labor Support Guide to the bedside or huddle.

**What to Say:** "Can we use this Admission Discussion Guide to talk through next steps?"

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## Using the Discussion Guides

### Assisted Delivery Guide [\[download the PDF\]](#)

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**Scenario:** Your client has been pushing for over an hour when the provider raises concerns about fetal heart tones and mentions the possibility of a vacuum-assisted delivery. She looks confused and anxious.

**Why Use the Tool:** The Assisted Delivery Guide can help inform your client of the minimum criteria needed for an assisted delivery (i.e. vacuum, forceps, or c-section) and ensure the client is actively involved in the conversation.

#### Doula Action Steps

- If at a TeamBirth hospital, ask if they have printed guides available.
- Suggest huddling to walk through the guide together.
- Encourage use of the BRAIN tool to assess benefits, risks, and alternatives.

**What to Say:** “It sounds like you’ve identified a concern. Can we use the Assisted Delivery Discussion Guide to help navigate this conversation?”

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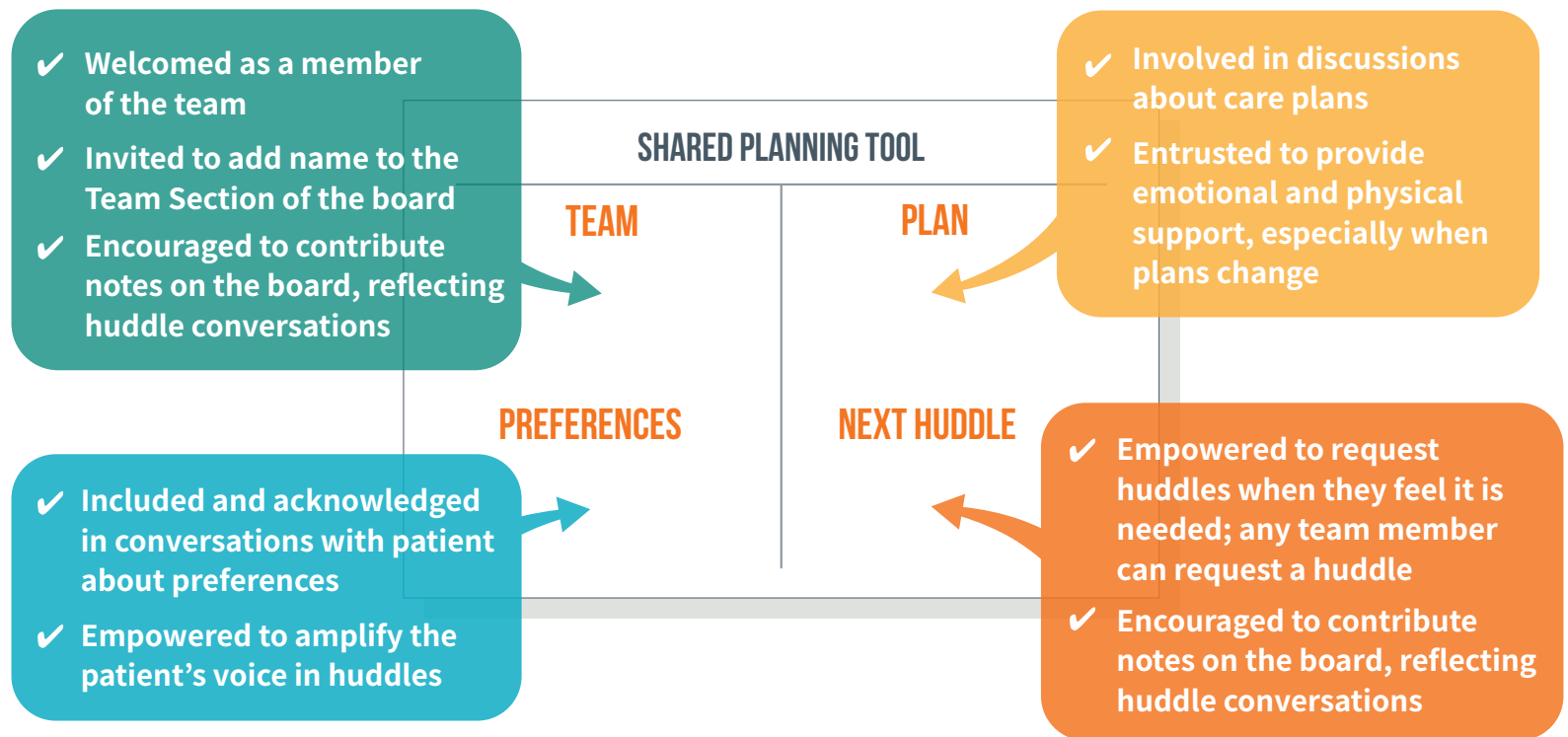
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At this point, you have learned about what TeamBirth is and how you as a doula can participate. Overall, as a doula providing support at a TeamBirth birthing facility, you should be:



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**SECTION GOAL:** Answer frequently asked questions.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: How do hospitals find out about TeamBirth?

**A:** Hospitals learn about TeamBirth in different ways—some reach out directly, others participate through statewide initiatives or multi-hospital cohorts, and some choose to implement independently using the free online resources.

### Q: What training do clinical teams receive around TeamBirth and doula integration?

**A:** Clinical teams typically participate in an in-person TeamBirth training and virtual learning sessions and coaching calls over the course of 12 months to troubleshoot challenges, review patient experience data, and plan for long-term sustainability. We also offer a clinician guide to integrating doulas, which helps teams understand the role and benefits of doula support.

### Q: Can you be trained in TeamBirth but work at a hospital that hasn't implemented it?

**A:** Absolutely. You can still apply TeamBirth principles to support clear communication and shared decision-making. Downloadable Shared Planning Tools and other tools below allow you to implement TeamBirth principles with your clients, even if the full team-based model isn't in place.

### Q: What happens if I'm at a TeamBirth hospital but don't see huddles happening or boards being filled out?

**A:** Implementation and culture change can take time. You can check in with the bedside nurse or charge nurse, use your understanding of TeamBirth to support and prompt huddles when appropriate, and raise concerns with care team leadership if needed.

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### Q: What do you do if you aren't being acknowledged by the clinical team or invited into huddles?

**A:** Start by introducing your role and intention to collaborate with the care team. If challenges persist, ask to speak with the charge nurse or unit leadership. TeamBirth is intentionally designed to include doulas as part of the care team.

### Q: Where can I see examples of filled-out boards?

**A:** You can view several sample boards [here](#). [[PDF Download](#)].

### Q: Are there other tools to support doulas engaging clients prenatally?

**A:** Yes! The TeamBirth Prenatal Booklet [[download the PDF](#)] is a helpful resource to introduce clients to the model, explore their preferences, and prepare for shared decision-making during labor and birth.

[Go to the next section](#) to explore all doula resources.

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**SECTION GOAL:** Offer tools to support clients, facilitate collaboration with clinical teams, and navigate common challenges.

## Tools for Your Doula Bag

The following tools were designed to support doulas in serving clients and working with clinical teams at TeamBirth hospitals.

### When to Huddle: A Doula's Guide to Sparking the Conversation

This tool can help you as a doula understand when huddles may be needed, outlining scenarios that range from low-urgency (usually no huddle needed) to high-urgency (huddle strongly indicated). [\[PDF Download\]](#)

### TeamBirth Doula Elevator Pitch & Quick Reference Sheet

This tool offers a ready-to-use elevator pitch to introduce yourself to the clinical team and quick reference information about TeamBirth and your role in supporting communication and shared decision-making within the model. [\[PDF Download\]](#)

### Common Preferences Wordbank

This tool offers examples of patient preferences for labor, birth, and postpartum. Use the wordbank prenatally to discuss what matters most to your client and as a reference in the hospital when eliciting and documenting preferences on the Shared Planning Tool. [\[PDF download\]](#)

### Birth Preferences Snapshot

This tool can help summarize what your client wants in their labor, birth, and postpartum experience (green), what they're open to with discussion (yellow), and what they want to avoid (red). [\[PDF Download\]](#)

### Scenario-Based Role-Plays

Practice navigating real-world situations you may face when working in a TeamBirth hospital. Each scenario includes optional sample language to help center the client, promote collaboration, and de-escalate tension. Be sure to pause and reflect for each! [\[PDF download\]](#)

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## Patient Journey Map

The patient journey map illustrates an example of a client experience with TeamBirth — from prenatal care through postpartum — and highlights how you as a doula can provide support at each stage, along with the tools available to guide your involvement. [\[PDF Download\]](#)

## TeamBirth Prenatal Booklet

The TeamBirth Prenatal Booklet introduces patients to the TeamBirth model as they prepare for labor and delivery. It can help your clients understand what to expect, clarify their preferences and concerns, and reflect on their birth stories. [\[PDF Download\]](#)



### Download these tools

Scan this QR Code to access the full library  
of doula support materials. [Or visit this link.](#)