

Douglas and Pregnancy

Average Number of Pregnant Women

Approximately 5.6 percent of women are pregnant when they arrive at the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Shakopee. Women enter the facility at all stages of pregnancy, and may give birth during incarceration, or be released to the community before giving birth.

Awareness of Pregnancy

All females 60 years of age and under are tested for pregnancy upon arrival. Pregnant women 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 inmates 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.

Minnesota Prison Doula Project

Minnesota Prison Doula Project (MNPDP) is a privately funded prison-based pregnancy, birth, and parenting program provided to 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 women need to be stronger, more connected mothers.

How many births has MNPDP supported?

Between January 2011 and December 2020, there were 120 births supported by doulas.

Are pregnant women 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 women may choose to be housed in the Parenting Unit.

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

If an incarcerated woman chooses to breast feed their newborn while in the hospital, they may do so. They may choose to pump at MCF-Shakopee to continue milk production, but the DOC does not allow storage or transportation of breast milk.

How does the process work?

During labor, the doula will meet the 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 women be restrained?

Correctional staff may not use restraints on a pregnant woman. 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 may be used. The individual will be restrained per normal procedures upon returning to the MCF-Shakopee.

What is the feedback from those who have used MNPDP?

After 12 weeks of group-based support and education, women reported significantly fewer depressive symptoms, more confidence as parents, and more support from other women at MCF-Shaklopee and facility staff. Women who participate in the doula program typically report very high levels of satisfaction.

Number of Deliveries by MCF-Shakopee Inmates Since 2009

Year	Births
2009	17
2010	16
2011	19
2012	5
2013	13
2014	22
2015	12
2016	19
2017	25
2018	15
2019	17
2020	4
Total	184