



## **Florida Blue Maternal Health Grant Expands Free Doula Training Program**

*NEFHSC awarded a four-year Florida Blue Foundation Maternal Health Grant*

**Jacksonville, Fla.** (April 3, 2025) – The Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition (NEFHSC) is one of eight nonprofit organizations across the state of Florida that was recently awarded a Maternal Health Grant from the [Florida Blue Foundation](#). The four-year grant adds a second doula training program, allowing us to offer comprehensive instruction to individuals interested in becoming certified doulas, providing them with the tools and support to assist families throughout pregnancy, labor and up to a one year postpartum.

NEFHSC launched its first doula program in 2024 — the Northeast Florida Healthy Start G.R.O.W. Doula Training — helping to expand our community’s network of trained professionals who offer specialized, non-medical support during pregnancy and childbirth. With the Florida Blue Foundation funding, our new training program — the Northeast Florida FOCUS Doula Collective — will be able to equip even more future doulas with the knowledge, skills and certification required to support expectant families during one of the most critical times of their lives: the first year of a child’s life.

“To meaningfully address the maternal health crisis, we must come together to increase access to the care and support mothers’ needs throughout every step of their pregnancy journey and beyond,” said Susan Towler, executive director of Florida Blue Foundation. “By supporting nonprofits like the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, we can reduce complications, improve birth outcomes, and set both mothers and babies up for long-term health and success.”


“We are thrilled to offer this vital training to people in our community,” said Shelby Salter, NEFHSC’s doula coordinator. “Doulas play an integral role in helping families navigate pregnancy, childbirth and the first year postpartum. We’re proud to offer this opportunity to those who wish to become certified professionals in this impactful field.”

Through the program, NEFHSC will provide hands-on training, mentorship and resources to aspiring doulas. Participants will gain expertise in childbirth education, labor support techniques, and postpartum care, with a focus on mental health, cultural competency and advocacy for diverse populations. The program will also include practical experience and guidance from established professionals in the field.

“NEFHSC is committed to continuing its work in empowering communities and improving health outcomes for families, particularly those from marginalized groups,” said Faye Johnson, CEO of NEFHSC. “We anticipate that our doula training program will have a lasting positive impact on the local health ecosystem, offering families improved birth experiences and better overall health.”

The first cohort of students for FOCUS will begin training on April 18, 2025. For more information or to apply for future training sessions, visit [NEFHSC’s website](#) or contact Shelby Salter at 904.884.3834 or [ssalter@nefhsc.org](mailto:ssalter@nefhsc.org).

751 Oak St. Suite 610 • Jacksonville, FL 32204 • (904) 723-5422 p

   @nefhealthystart |  <http://nefhealthystart.org>

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#### **About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition**

The NEFHSC leads the community effort to reduce infant death and improve the health of children, childbearing women, fathers and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, view [our media kit](#) or contact Lisa Luther at [lisa@createaruckus.com](mailto:lisa@createaruckus.com) or 904.536.9957. Visit the [Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions](#) for statewide information or the [National Healthy Start Association](#) for national data.

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