Noteworthy **November 2019**

Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers

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Noteworthy: A Conversation with a CABC-Accredited Birth Center

Interview with Dr. Paula Pelletier-Butler, DM, MS, LM; Owner and Executive Director, Flagstaff Birth & Women's Center

This is the next installment in the series, "Noteworthy: A Conversation with a CABC-Accredited Birth Center"

Flagstaff Birth & Women's Center is located in Flagstaff, AZ. The birth center opened in 2013 and has been CABC-accredited since inception. Paula Pelletier-Butler recently sat down to talk with CABC Commissioner Olga Ryan.

Olga: What made you want to go into midwifery and open a birth center?

Paula: I was put on this Earth to serve women. I made a very conscious decision that I wanted the best education available in community birth, and that is why I chose Bastyr. I came from Seattle, where there is a prolific birth center culture. There wasn't a birth center in all of northern Arizona. Flagstaff was the perfect community to start a birth center!

Olga: What are you most proud of about your birth center?

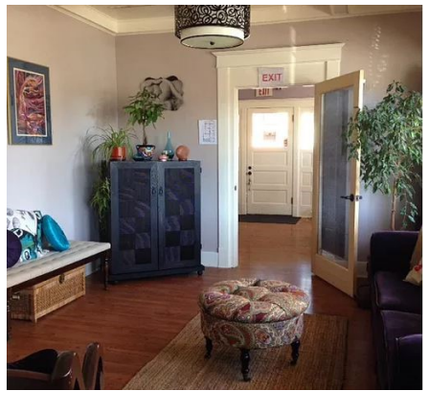
Paula: Providing the first integrated healthcare center in Flagstaff, including midwifery care, naturopathic care, lactation care, acupuncture, massage, chiropractic care, yoga, and nutrition.

Olga: Please describe your client population.

Paula: We see a predominantly white, middle-class clientele, with some native American and Hispanic families. We serve Medicaid clients and are contracted with all insurance plans. We have very few cash clients.

Olga: Do your midwives attend births in places other than the birth center?

Paula: Because we are a birth center focused practice, we only do two home births each month. Because I started the birth center, it is my second home, so my preference is attending births at the birth center—but I do love home births for those women who desire it.



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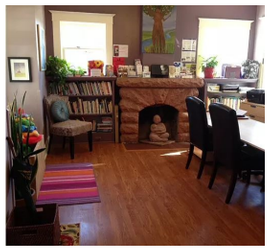
Olga: How has your birth center practice changed how things are done at the hospital?

Paula: Our team doesn't have hospital privileges right now, but our hospital has changed dramatically since we've opened. They now offer nitrous oxide, essential oils, and have a new emphasis on skin-to-skin care and delayed cord clamping! They've also started to offer early discharge and changed their name to "Birth & Wellness Center."

Olga: What is your birth center's biggest challenge?



Paula: The hospital is working harder to compete with us and we continue to work hard to overcome billing issues.

Olga: What is the best thing that happened for your birth center in the past year?

Paula: We started a women's film festival that now has a diverse Board of Directors and many community sponsors. We are growing yearly and changed the name to the "Arizona Women's Film Festival". All proceeds go towards domestic violence support and prevention services in Flagstaff."

Olga: What exciting plans do you have for the birth center?

Paula: We just created a non-profit arm for our lactation center. We hope to offer more home births next year.

Olga: Why do you think it's important for your birth center to be CABC-accredited?

Paula: It is the hallmark of excellence—it let's my community know that we aren't just hanging out a shingle and calling ourselves a birth center. Accreditation ensures that we are following our Policies and Procedures.

Olga: Have you changed anything about your birth center or how you do something as a result of CABC accreditation?

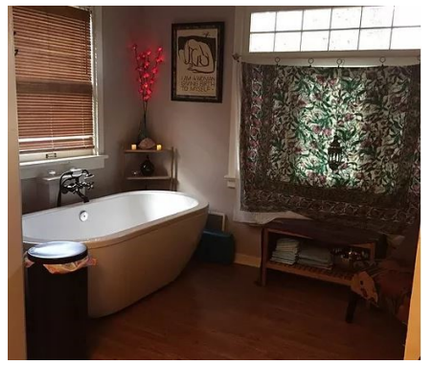
Paula: No, we opened with accreditation, so it's literally infused into all we do.

Olga: What are the benefits of a fairly new midwife or student midwife having experience in a birth center?

Paula: Seeing and experiencing unmedicated birth that is led by the pregnant person rather than the provider.

Olga: What advice would you give someone thinking of opening a birth center?

Paula: Build it and they will come….this is a successful model that is desired by families today. You have to dig in and do the hard work for the first couple of years to get it off the ground but don't hesitate to hire help as soon as you need it!



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