

Black Coalition for Safe Motherhood's

# ACTT for Dads and Partners Script

4Kira4Dads App content

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The spouse or partner's emotional support and physical comfort has healing potential and health benefits for pregnant and birthing moms - and babies too. Sometimes we Dads may not know how to play our position or our role in that support.

The Black Coalition for Safe Motherhood has formulated the ACTT curriculum to help us navigate common issues we may face during this important time, so that birth **can** be the joyous event it should be - free from fear and discrimination. ACTT is a powerful framework for taking charge of your family's health and wellbeing:

## **ACTT stands for:**



Ask questions until you are satisfied with the answers and until the answers make sense to you both. It's a human right to make informed decisions about our bodies and our lives.

Support your wife or partner in claiming control over what happens to her body and her life choices. Touching and examining her against her wishes is an assault on her bodily autonomy. Coercion or forcing procedures on her is traumatizing and harmful. Remember that freedom of choice and self-determination are human rights.

Help her trust what she feels and tell the care team what she is feeling. Support her when she feels powerful and confident in her ability to give birth as she prefers, and - most important - help her get attention for concerns and symptoms that may be a sign of trouble. The Dad's presence, even if on speaker phone, can claim the attention pregnant or postpartum women deserve when the doctors or nurses are not listening.

Caring for mothers during the pregnancy and birth takes a team. As the Dad you want to comfort and lift your partner through the experience. Doctors and other medical professionals are part of the team as well. Work with them to bring about positive results for your child and your partner.

Together all things are possible. Here are some examples of questions or statements your wife might say to prospective healthcare providers to see if they are a good fit to team up with you as you bring a new life into our world:

- I want to be informed and involved in any decisions that are made about me and my baby.
- We have some questions or concerns
- How can we work together to keep me and my baby safe and healthy?
- Do you welcome the support of a doula and my birth plan?

It is powerful to know that it's a legal right to be fully informed about recommended treatment before any medical decision is made. This is called informed decision making or informed choice. Ask:

“What are the risks of harm?”. In other words, what could go wrong?

Say: “What are the benefits of doing what you recommend, Doc?” And “Is there an alternative?”

## ***Informed Consent/Refusal/Choice***

- Legal Right to make an Informed Choice
- Treatment, Tests, Operations, Procedures
- Risks and Benefits - based on best evidence
- Alternatives – including Doing Nothing
- It's a conversation not a consent form!



We Dads must understand that pregnancy does not limit our partners' right to refuse recommended treatment. And we must stand up for the human right we all have to control of what happens to our bodies – and pregnancies. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, called ACOG for short, is the organization that guides the doctors who deliver most babies, and they state that it is the right of the person giving birth to make the final decision - not the doctor. Put another way:

Childbearing does not limit rights to bodily autonomy, dignity and self-determination. The pregnant person is the decision maker for their baby. (See [Right of Refusal of Recommended Treatment](#) of the ACOG Ethics Committee)

A good partner is a prepared partner and educating ourselves about pregnancy and birth are key to being a strong Dad, advocating for your family, and learning what kind of maternity services you both want.

Vet the services. Check out doctors, midwives and hospitals or birth centers by checking reviews such as the [IRTH App](#) with Yelp-like reviews of the hospitals and providers in your area.

## ***Vetting Services***

### ***Informed consumers get better results!***

- Compare Home Birth, Birthing Centers, Hospital Birth
- Learn about the care of Midwives and Obstetricians
- What birth do you value/prefer?
- Who do you want to attend the birth?
- Where is there safety and respect? **Irth App**



The healthcare provider, be they midwife or doctor, is on your team and you want to be in partnership with all team members.

What you do in practice you do in the game. Let's practice what to say or what to do when your loved one is facing challenging healthcare situations.

What about when your partner is asking questions, and the answers are not clear? Suppose the doctor is rushing or dismissive or disrespectful? Your family is worthy of safe respectful care so practice saying these and other statements found on the [Coalition website](#) before the visit or birth.

- We have some questions we'd like you to answer. Here is our list.
- We don't understand your answer or explanation. Can you say it more slowly? Can you explain it simply?
- Let me repeat what you just said to make sure we understand what we need to know.
- I know you are pressed for time, but her health is important to us. Please take a few minutes more to discuss this with us.
- Doc, what you said felt disrespectful, did you mean it that way?
- If someone is disrespectful to you or your partner or spouse, think about how you can respond in a way that they can see their error.

Here's some ways your partner might respond when there is a difference of opinion, or she prefers a different approach to her pregnancy and birth than the doctor.

## ***When You Disagree***

- I need more information to make a decision.
- I'd like some time to talk to my partner, supporter, or Doula about this.
- We would like to pray on this, please give us some privacy.
- I respectfully decline. Or simply: "No, Thank You."
- I will get a second opinion.
- This is problematic for me.
- Suggest preferred alternatives or compromise.
- What is the medical evidence for what you are recommending?
- Please see the ethics statement of your ACOG on my right of refusal.
- Here's a copy of your Patients' Bill of Rights.
- What led you to that decision or recommendation?



## ***Other ways to take ACTION***

- We want a second opinion from the Chief of Labor and Delivery. The Head of High-Risk Obstetrics or Postpartum. Name names!
- Would you want this treatment for your sister, wife, daughter?
- Would you send your loved one home like this?
- What is the medical evidence for what you are recommending?
- How can you be sure? What else could this be Doc?
- Yell for Help in the hallway or at nurses' station if no one is coming and your loved one is in danger.



Hey, we hope the ACTT toolkit will be helpful in winning the birth your family desires. You, as co-captain of the birthing family, will help build confidence and power by having those conversations about what Mom values and prefers, by practicing how you will have her back, and by being informed and involved in her care. That's winning teamwork.

We at the Black Coalition for Safe Motherhood are thankful for the opportunity to share the ACTT curriculum with you. Please feel free to take part in the workshops we offer at no cost, and practice using the ACTT tips and tools that can help you and your partner have a winning pregnancy and birth. Be well. <https://blackcoalitionforsafemotherhood.org/>