

# BIRTH SETTINGS

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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[www.centralcoastchildbirthnetwork.com](http://www.centralcoastchildbirthnetwork.com)



# BIRTH SETTING OPTIONS

## HOSPITAL

Hospitals are the most common birth setting in the United States, making up 98.4% of births. Hospitals are especially recommended for higher-risk pregnancies but are also available to low-risk pregnancies. Hospitals have the resources on hand to address critical health issues and complications if they do arise. It is recommended that all pregnant individuals consult with their health care providers for clarity on any risks that may impact birth choices.

Delivering in hospitals provides patients access to medically managed care and emergent care. Sierra Vista, Marian, and Cottage Hospitals offer newborn intensive care units (NICU). During labor and delivery, available staff are typically obstetrician/gynecologist(s) (OB/GYNs), anesthesiologist if epidural or cesareans are being administered, certified nurse-midwife(s) (CNM), and registered nurses (RNs). Everyone has the right to make a medically informed decision about delivery, so consult with one's health care provider about one's unique pregnancy and how to reduce risks.

### Drawbacks

Giving birth in a hospital can limit the birthing individuals' autonomy, personal choices during their labor, and satisfaction with their delivery experience. Hospitals often have strict policies, protocols, and standardized birth procedures. Hospitals approach childbirth as a medical procedure, which can lead to a cascade of interventions and increased costs. Hospital staff shift changes and intermittent check-ins can contribute to a less private, less peaceful, and less restful environment.

EVERY PREGNANCY AND BIRTH IS DIFFERENT AND BECAUSE OF THAT YOU HAVE OPTIONS!

### THREE MAIN BIRTH SETTINGS:

HOSPITAL, FREESTANDING BIRTH CENTER, AND HOME BIRTH

CHOOSING THE RIGHT BIRTH SETTING IS DEPENDENT ON:

PREFERENCE, BIRTH TEAM ACCESS, LOCATION, AND LEVEL OF RISK OF LABOR & DELIVERY COMPLICATIONS.

### WHAT TO EXPECT FOR A VAGINAL BIRTH;

All of our local hospitals have preregistration available, many people will pre-register for the delivery and take a tour of the facilities. For birth, when an individual arrives to the hospital they are examined and active labor can be confirmed, then they will be admitted to a hospital labor & delivery room. Once here, patients can continue to labor on their own and decide on their pain management. Health providers will come to check-in with the patient periodically. When contractions become stronger, longer, and closer together, the provider will be called in to guide the individual through the pushes and delivery. Right after birth, health providers will quickly assess the baby's health, and then the postpartum individual and newborn will rest for 1-2 days before heading home. During recovery, the newborn will be offered additional baby health screening and routine treatments. Every birth is unique and recovery methods and duration may vary.



## FREE STANDING BIRTH CENTER

**Although freestanding birth centers account for the smallest amount of US births, about 0.52% of births in the US and 0.32% of California's, births at birth centers have doubled from 2004 to 2017. Freestanding birth centers are great options for low-risk pregnancies.**

Freestanding birth centers are an in-between setting of hospitals and home births. Our local freestanding birth centers are independent facilities that are run by licensed midwives, accompanied by student midwives, and doulas. These facilities support a family-centered, natural birth approach with minimal medical intervention. Local birth centers offer midwife services to guide and support people throughout pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. Santa Lucia Birth Center also partners with local community members to provide support groups and educational classes on pregnancy, postpartum, and parenting. At birth centers, individuals have the flexibility to give birth how they prefer.

**Drawbacks** Birth centers are equipped and stocked with the appropriate medical supplies and equipment for a planned, low-risk, vaginal birth. However, if major complications arise, pregnant individuals will be recommended to transfer to the hospital. Our local birth centers accommodate patients in active labor and have a quick patient discharge of about 4 - 6 hours after delivery.

**FUN FACT:** We have two local freestanding birth centers in San Luis Obispo County (See the last page for details!)

### WHAT TO EXPECT FOR A VAGINAL BIRTH:

Although birth centers may vary and have their own policies, recommendations, and routine procedures, here is what one may expect when delivering at a birth center.

Many people start by taking a tour of the facility and scheduling a consultation with a midwife who will then usually provide prenatal care and health monitoring throughout their pregnancy. Visits are usually 45-minutes to 1-hour. Once the birthing individual is in active labor, they will head over to the birth center and be admitted to their private room. Upon arrival, licensed midwife(s) will be by their side in the room to monitor them throughout their labor and delivery. Minimal medical intervention takes place to support a physiologic birth, and individuals are allowed to go at their own pace. After delivery, the newborn and recovering individual stay in the same room for postpartum newborn screening, rest, and bonding. Most individuals are cleared to be discharged around 4-6 hours after birth, and at most 24 hours. For the next 24 - 72 hours, the licensed midwife will follow up with the parent and newborn to check on postpartum recovery. Midwives will typically provide follow-up care for up to 12 weeks after delivery.





## HOME BIRTH

**Birth in the comfort of one's own home accounts for about 1% of US births and 0.75% of California births. Like freestanding birth center births, home births have been increasing over the past two decades, increasing by 77% from 2004–2017.**

Home births support a family-centered, physiologic birth and have minimal medical interventions. Birthing at home allows one to have freedom and control over the birth process as well as space for visitors and children to attend. Providers often present in a home birth are licensed Midwives and Doulas. Midwives prepare the individual for the birth and support them throughout the process. Many individuals preparing for home birth will go through out-of-hospital childbirth education online or in-person with local Doulas and Childbirth Educators to help prepare for birth. Midwives often offer a combination of prenatal and postpartum services through home visits and office visits.

### Drawbacks

Like freestanding birth centers, home births are recommended for low-risk pregnancies and births. Midwives bring the necessary supplies to care for a laboring individual and newborn. Occasionally, the birthing individual or baby will be recommended to transfer to the hospital for additional medical care. Our local Midwives carry newborn resuscitation equipment, anti-hemorrhage medications, and suture kits to provide basic medical care for the birthing individual and newborn, if needed.



### WHAT TO EXPECT FOR A VAGINAL BIRTH:

Many people begin the homebirth journey by consulting with a Midwife. During initial consultations the Midwife will answer questions and determine risk factors to ensure Midwifery care is appropriate for the individual. Midwives will provide services prenatal care throughout the pregnancy including ultrasounds, labs, and prenatal testing.

When in labor, individuals will contact their Doula or Midwife to come over to the home. Doulas and Midwives work together to track contractions, monitor the laboring individual, and will prepare the home for the birth. In a home birth, Individuals can deliver at their own pace with minimal medical intervention. After the golden hour has passed, baby has latched, the placenta has been birthed, and the birth person has settled in, Midwives will perform a comprehensive newborn health exam. Midwives will typically leave within 2-6 hours after birth. Midwives will often do postpartum home visits within 48 hours and near the 1-week mark. Postpartum care with our local Midwives is down through 12 weeks postpartum.





## COST COMPARISON

Out-of-pocket cost is highly dependent on birth location, type of birth, care provider services, and insurance coverage

Birth Location	Average Costs	Average Out of Pocket Costs	Average Insurance Payments
Hospital	\$15,000 - \$45,000	\$5,000 - \$11,000	\$10,000 - \$34,000
Freestanding Birth Center	\$3,000 - \$7,000	\$1,000 - \$5,000	\$0 - \$2,000
Home Birth with Midwife	\$5,000 - \$7,000	\$3,000 - \$5,000	\$0 - \$2,000

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS ...

There are great birth setting options available for different pregnancies and birth experiences. In an NPR interview, UCSF OB-GYN Dr. Robyn Lamar importantly notes what makes a birth setting a good one for both body and mind. She explains an individual "is more likely to dilate and embrace difficult contractions if [they] feel comfortable and supported in [their] surroundings. In other words, feeling safe can not only lead to a more positive emotional experience, but also a faster delivery." Having a birth setting that gives confidence and comfort can provide a much better experience both physically and emotionally, so take the time to find the place that is the best fit for you. Below are some of the key benefits for each birth setting:



## LOCAL RESOURCES

SERVING SAN LUIS OBISPO AND NORTHERN SANTA BARBARA COUNTIES

### HOSPITALS

**Twin Cities Community Hospital (Tenet Health)**

1100 Las Tablas Rd, Templeton, CA 93465  
(805) 434-3500

**French Hospital Medical Center (Dignity Health)**

1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
(805) 543-5353

**Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center (Tenet Health)**

1010 Murray Ave, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405  
(805) 546-7600

**Marian Regional Medical Center (Dignity Health)**

1400 E Church St, Santa Maria, CA 93454  
(805) 739-3000

**Lompoc Valley Medical Center**

1515 E Ocean Ave, Lompoc, CA 93436  
(805) 737-3395

**Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital**

400 W Pueblo St, Santa Barbara, CA 93105  
(805) 682-7111

### BIRTH CENTERS

**Santa Lucia Birth Center**

4251 South Higuera St, Suite 300, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Phone: (805) 548-0606  
Email: [info@santaluciabirthcenter.com](mailto:info@santaluciabirthcenter.com)

**Intimate Journey Birth & Wellness Birth Center**

134 S Halcyon Rd, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420  
Phone: (805) 270-4466  
Accepting Medi-Cal/ CenCal Health Insurance

### HOME BIRTH MIDWIVES

**Manzanita Midwifery, Jennifer Oquendo, LM CPM**

(805)-458-2611  
[manzanitamomma@gmail.com](mailto:manzanitamomma@gmail.com)  
<https://manzanitamidwifery.com/>

**Natures Way Midwifery, Tanya Walker, LM, CPM**

(805) 202-6575  
[natureswaymidwife@gmail.com](mailto:natureswaymidwife@gmail.com)  
<https://natureswaymidwife.com/>

**GEA Midwifery, Katrina Bolduc, LM, CPM**

(805) 748-2939  
<https://geamidwifery.com/>

**Kinship Midwifery, Alia Clark, LM, CPM**

(805) 465-9847  
[alia@kinshipmidwifery.com](mailto:alia@kinshipmidwifery.com)  
<https://www.kinshipmidwifery.com/>

**Pure Birth, Justine Waldram, LM, CPM**

(805) 994-0074  
[justine@purebirthmidwife.com](mailto:justine@purebirthmidwife.com)  
<http://www.purebirthmidwife.com/>

**Cypress Midwifery, Natalie McCluskey LM, CPM**

(805) 996-0119  
[natalie@cypressmidwifery.com](mailto:natalie@cypressmidwifery.com)  
<https://www.cypressmidwifery.com/>