



## **NEDA Proficiency Assessment: A Micro-Credential**

by Merilynne Rush, MSHP, RN, BSN

The NEDA Proficiency Assessment, for which one earns a Proficiency Badge, is a digital micro-credential that provides evidence of achieving a certain level of knowledge. It is based on a set of core competencies that was developed by end-of life doulas and trainers from a variety of organizations. Some individual organizations offer a more comprehensive credential or certification that also assesses skills (see below). EOLDs may want to consider pursuing both. To earn the Proficiency Badge, one must be a member of NEDA and agree to abide by the NEDA Standards of Practice (Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics) for EOLDs.

The NEDA Proficiency Assessment was developed to lend consistency to the definition of what an EOLD is and does, and to provide a degree of assurance to organization and families that use or refer to EOLDs. By earning the badge, EOLDs receive confirmation that their knowledge compares to other EOLDs who have done so. Similarly, any healthcare organization (such as hospice or palliative care) or any family, also can know that an EOLD with the badge has achieved a certain standard and has agreed to the NEDA Standards of Practice. This is especially important because there are so many different training organizations, definitions, and experience levels that result in confusion about the profession.

For example, some individual training organizations offer certification that entails a robust, complete feedback process and assessment of learning, knowledge, skills and experience. Field experience, writing assignments, an exam, and other assessments may be required before conferring certification. A "macro-credential" of this type usually requires active involvement in the field, continuing education and periodic renewal of the doula's certification status. Another type of credential is a simple "certificate of attendance" that indicates attending a workshop or training; it has no assessment process and does not assess knowledge or skills.

The reason NEDA offers a *micro-credential* is that NEDA is not a training and certifying body and does not intend to assess experience level and skills; it assesses knowledge only. Because there are so many regional and stylistic differences in training programs and ways of being an EOLD, leaders in the field agreed on the need to self-regulate by setting national standards and a defined scope of practice. The NEDA process is not meant to replace any individual training programs' certification. As the field develops, this may change.

With an individual organization's certification, doulas can be confident that their knowledge, skills and experience compare favorably to others who have achieved *that organization's certification only*. Each organization's certification can only be compared to itself. NEDA offers a quick and simple way to compare everyone.

The decision whether to professionalize one's doula practice by pursuing credentials is up to each EOLD. It is a voluntary process and is not required in any state in order to practice as an EOLD. At this time, doulas can choose to: (1) pursue certification through their affiliated training organization; (2) earn the NEDA Proficiency Badge; (3) do both; or (4) do neither.

— Merylynne Rush, MSHP, RN, BSN

*Merylynne Rush, MSHP, RN, BSN, co-founder and President of NEDA, former home birth midwife and hospice nurse, is an End-of-Life Doula Trainer, Respecting Choices® Facilitator and Instructor, home funeral guide, and green burial educator. She is a Nurse Educator with an MS in Hospice and Palliative Studies. Rush owns two end-of-life related businesses, Lifespan Doula Association, and After Death Home Care. She founded and facilitates the Ann Arbor Death Café and is an emeritus member of the National Home Funeral Alliance and Green Burial Council boards of directors.*