

Corporate Medical Policy

Gender Confirmation Surgery and Hormone Therapy

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Description of Procedure or Service

Gender Dysphoria (GD) is the formal diagnosis used by professionals to describe persons who experience significant gender dysphoria (discontent with their biological sex and/or birth gender). Although it is a psychiatric classification, GD is not medically classified as a mental illness.

In the U.S., the American Psychiatric Association (APA) permits a diagnosis of gender dysphoria in adolescents and adults if the diagnostic criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, (DSM-5TM) are met. The criteria are:

- A. A marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least six month's duration, as manifested by at least **two** of the following:
 1. A marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and primary and/or secondary sex characteristics (or in young adolescents, the anticipated secondary sex characteristics); **OR**
 2. A strong desire to be rid of one's primary and/or secondary sex characteristics because of a marked incongruence with one's experienced/expressed gender (or in young adolescents, a desire to prevent the development of the anticipated secondary sex characteristics); **OR**
 3. A strong desire for the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics of the other gender; **OR**
 4. A strong desire to be of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender); **OR**
 5. A strong desire to be treated as the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender); **OR**
 6. A strong conviction that one has the typical feelings and reactions of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender); **AND**
- B. The condition is associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Gender dysphoria is a medical condition when the elements of the condition noted above are present. Gender confirmation surgery is one treatment option. Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS) is not a single procedure, but part of a complex process involving multiple medical, psychiatric, and surgical modalities performed in conjunction with each other to help the candidate for gender reassignment achieve successful behavioral and medical outcomes. Before undertaking GCS, candidates need to undergo important medical and psychological evaluations, and begin medical/hormonal therapies and behavioral trials to confirm that surgery is the most appropriate treatment choice. GCS presents significant medical and psychological risks, and the results are irreversible.

*****Note: This Medical Policy is complex and technical. For questions concerning the technical language and/or specific clinical indications for its use, please consult your provider.**

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Services for gender confirmation surgery and hormone therapy may be considered medically necessary when the criteria below are met.

Please see the following section “Benefits Application” regarding specific benefit and medical management requirements.

Benefits Application

Gender confirmation surgery and hormone therapy may be specifically excluded under some health benefit plans. Please refer to the Member’s Benefit Booklet for availability of benefits.

When benefits for gender confirmation surgery and hormone therapy are available, coverage may vary according to benefit design. Some benefit designs for gender confirmation surgery may include benefits for pelvic and/or breast reconstruction. Member benefit language specific to gender confirmation should be reviewed before applying the terms of this medical policy. This medical policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein.

Prior review and certification are required by most benefit plans, and when required, must be obtained or services will not be covered. Some benefit plans provide coverage without a requirement for prior approval or medical necessity review. Please refer to the Member’s Benefit Booklet for specific prior approval or medical necessity review requirements.

If prior authorization and medical necessity review are required for hormone therapy, and related surgical procedures for the treatment of gender dysphoria, the medical criteria and guidelines shown below will be utilized to determine the medical necessity for the requested procedure or treatment.

When Gender Confirmation Surgery and Hormone Therapy is covered

Gender confirmation surgery and hormone therapy may be considered medically necessary when all the following candidate criteria are met and supporting provider documentation is provided:

Candidate Criteria for Adults and Adolescents age 18 years and Older for Gender Confirmation Surgery

1. The candidate is at least 18 years of age; and
2. Has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, including meeting all of the following indications:
 - a. The desire to live and be accepted as a member of the opposite sex,
 - Typically accompanied by the desire to make the physical body as congruent as possible with the identified sex through surgery and hormone treatment; and
 - b. The new gender identity has been present for at least 6 months; and
 - c. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be reasonably well-controlled; and
 - d. The gender dysphoria causes clinical or social distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
3. For those candidates without a medical contraindication, the candidate has undergone a minimum of 12 months of continuous hormonal therapy that is (Note: for those candidates requesting female to male surgery see item 4. below):
 - a. Recommended by a mental health professional and

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- b. Provided under the supervision of a physician; and the supervising physician indicates that the patient has taken the hormones as directed.
4. For candidates requesting female to male surgery only:
 - a. When the initial requested surgery is solely a mastectomy, the treating physician may indicate that no hormonal treatment (as described in criteria 3. above) is required prior to performance of the mastectomy. In this case, the 12 month requirement for hormonal treatment will be waived only when all other criteria contained in this policy and in the member's health benefit plan are met.
5. The candidate has completed a minimum of 12 months of successful continuous full time real-life experience in their new gender, with no returning to their original gender. This requirement must be demonstrated by living in their new gender while:
 - a. Maintaining part- or full-time employment; or
 - b. Functioning as a student in an academic setting; or
 - c. Functioning in a community-based volunteer activity as applicable. (For those candidates not meeting this criteria, see item 6. below.)
6. If the candidate does not meet the 12 month time frame criteria as noted in item 5. above, then the treating clinician must submit information indicating why it would be clinically inappropriate to require the candidate to meet these criteria. When submitted, the criteria in item 5. will be waived unless the criteria noted in item 5. above are specified as required in the candidate's health benefit plan.

Provider Documentation Criteria for Gender Confirmation Surgery:

The treating clinicians must provide the following documentation. The documentation must be provided in letters from the appropriate clinicians and contain the information noted below.

1. The letters must attest to the psychological aspects of the candidate's gender dysphoria.
 - a. One of the letters must be from a behavioral health professional with an appropriate degree (Ph.D., M.D., L.C.S.W., Ed.D., D.Sc., D.S.W., psychiatric physician assistant, Psy.D, or psychiatric nurse practitioner under the supervision of a psychiatrist) who is capable of adequately evaluating if the candidate has any co-morbid psychiatric conditions. When patients with gender dysphoria are also diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders and impaired reality testing (e.g., psychotic episodes, bipolar disorder, dissociative identity disorder, borderline personality disorder) an effort must be made to improve these conditions with psychotropic medications and/or psychotherapy before surgery is contemplated. Reevaluation by a mental health professional qualified to assess and manage psychotic conditions should be conducted prior to surgery, describing the patient's mental status and readiness for surgery. It is preferable that this mental health professional be familiar with the patient. No surgery should be performed while a patient is actively psychotic.
 - b. One of the letters must be from the candidate's established physician or behavioral health provider. The letter or letters must document the following:
 1. Whether the author of the letter is part of a gender dysphoria treatment team and/or follows current WPATH Standards of Care or Endocrine Society Guidelines for the Treatment of Transsexual Persons for evaluation and treatment of gender dysphoria; and
 2. The initial and evolving gender, sexual, and other psychiatric diagnoses (if applicable); and
 3. The duration of their professional relationship including the type evaluation that the candidate underwent; and
 4. The eligibility criteria that have been met by the candidate according to the above Standards of Care; and
 5. The physician or mental health professional's rationale for hormone therapy and/or surgery; and
 6. The degree to which the candidate has followed the treatment and experiential requirements to date and the likelihood of future compliance; and
 7. The extent of participation in psychotherapy throughout the 12 month real-life trial, (if such therapy is recommended by a treating medical or behavioral health practitioner) and

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8. That during the 12 month, real-life experience (for candidates not meeting the 12 month candidate criteria as noted in 6 and 7, the letter should still comment on the candidates ability to function and experience in the desired gender role), persons other than the treating therapist were aware of the candidate's experience in the desired gender role and could attest to the candidate's ability to function in the new role.
 9. That the candidate has, intends to, or is in the process of acquiring a legal gender-identity-appropriate name change and
 10. Demonstrable progress on the part of the candidate in consolidating the new gender identity, including improvements in the ability to handle:
 - Work, family, and interpersonal issues
 - Behavioral health issues, should they exist.
- c. If the letters specified in 1a and 1b above come from the same clinician, then a letter from a second physician or behavioral health provider familiar with the candidate corroborating the information provided by the first clinician is required.
 - d. For members requesting surgical treatment, a letter of documentation must be received from the treating surgeon. If one of the previously described letters is from the treating surgeon then it must contain the documentation noted in the section below. All letters from a treating surgeon must confirm that:
 1. The candidate meets the "candidate criteria" listed in this policy and
 2. The treating surgeon feels that the candidate is likely to benefit from surgery and
 3. The surgeon has personally communicated with the treating mental health provider or physician treating the candidate, and
 4. The surgeon has personally communicated with the candidate and the candidate understands the ramifications of surgery, including:
 - The required length of hospitalizations,
 - Possible complications of the surgery, and
 - The post surgical rehabilitation requirements of the various surgical approaches and the planned surgery.

Candidate Criteria for Children and Adolescents under Age 18 years

Pubertal delay and gender affirming hormone therapy may be considered medically necessary when all the following candidate criteria are met and supporting provider documentation is provided:

Candidate Criteria (based on World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care):

1. The patient has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, including meeting all of the following indications:
 - a. The desire to live and be accepted as a member of the opposite sex,
 - Typically accompanied by the desire to make the physical body as congruent as possible with the identified sex through surgery and hormone treatment; and
 - b. Any co-existing psychological, medical, or social problems that could interfere with treatment (e.g., that may compromise treatment adherence) have been addressed, such that the adolescent's situation and functioning are stable enough to start treatment; and
 - c. The gender dysphoria causes clinical or social distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
2. The candidate has completed a minimum of 12 months of successful continuous full time real-life experience in their new gender, with no returning to their original gender. This requirement must be demonstrated by living in their new gender while:
 - a. Maintaining part- or full-time employment; or
 - b. Functioning as a student in an academic setting; or
 - c. Functioning in a community-based volunteer activity as applicable. (For those candidates not meeting this criteria, see item 3. below.)

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3. If the candidate does not meet the 12 month time frame criteria as noted in item 2. above, then the treating clinician must submit information indicating why it would be clinically inappropriate to require the candidate to meet these criteria. When submitted, the criteria in item 2. will be waived unless the criteria noted in item 2. above are specified as required in the candidate's health benefit plan.

Provider Documentation Criteria for Pubertal Delay and Gender Affirming Hormonal Therapy:

The treating clinicians must provide the following documentation. The documentation must be provided in letters from the appropriate clinicians and contain the information noted below.

1. The letters must attest to the psychological aspects of the candidate's gender dysphoria
 - a. One of the letters must be from a behavioral health professional with an appropriate degree (Ph.D., M.D., Ed.D., D.Sc., D.S.W., psychiatric physician assistant, Psy.D, or psychiatric nurse practitioner under the supervision of a psychiatrist) who is capable of adequately evaluating if the candidate has any co-morbid psychiatric conditions.
 - b. One of the letters must be from the candidate's established physician or behavioral health provider. The letter or letters must document the following:
 1. Whether the author of the letter is part of a gender dysphoria treatment team and/or follows current WPATH Standards of Care or Endocrine Society Guidelines for the Treatment of Transsexual Persons for evaluation and treatment of gender dysphoria; and
 2. The initial and evolving gender, sexual, and other psychiatric diagnoses (if applicable); and
 3. The duration of their professional relationship including the type evaluation that the candidate underwent; and
 4. The eligibility criteria that have been met by the candidate according to the above Standards of Care; and
 5. The physician or mental health professional's rationale for hormone therapy; and
 6. The degree to which the candidate has followed the treatment and experiential requirements to date and the likelihood of future compliance; and
 7. The extent of participation in psychotherapy throughout the 12 month real-life trial, (if such therapy is recommended by a treating medical or behavioral health practitioner); and
 8. That during the 12 month, real-life experience (for candidates not meeting the 12 month candidate criteria as noted in 6 and 7, the letter should still comment on the candidates ability to function and experience in the desired gender role), persons other than the treating therapist were aware of the candidate's experience in the desired gender role and could attest to the candidate's ability to function in the new role.

Prepubertal children do not require medical or surgical treatment, but do require mental health services as listed above.

Criteria for Adolescents Entering Puberty

Adolescents, having reached puberty (tanner 2), and who have met eligibility and readiness criteria can be treated with GnRH analogues.

The definition of puberty is having reached Tanner stage 2/5 and/or having LH, estradiol levels or testosterone levels, within the pubertal range. These LH, estradiol and testosterone ranges are well-known and published and are broken down by biological male vs. biological female Tanner stage, and nocturnal and diurnal levels.

Adolescents are *eligible* for GnRH treatment, (for suppression of puberty) by these eligibility criteria: (same for adults)

1. Have an established diagnosis for GD or transsexualism based on DSM V or ICD-10 criteria;
2. Have experienced puberty to at least Tanner stage 2, which can be confirmed by pubertal levels of LH, estrogen or testosterone;
3. Have experienced pubertal changes that resulted in an increase of their gender dysphoria;
4. Do not suffer from psychiatric comorbidity (that interferes with the diagnostic work-up or treatment);
5. Have adequate psychological and social support during treatment, to include having parental/guardian consent;

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6. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the expected outcomes of GnRH analogue treatment, cross-sex hormone treatment, and gender confirmation surgeries, as well as the medical and social risks and benefits of gender reassignment; and have been counseled regarding fertility options.

Criteria for Postpubertal Adolescents under the Age of 18 Years

Post-pubertal adolescents under age 18 must meet the same criteria and documentation requirements for treatment as listed above for adults. If those criteria are met, they are eligible for gender affirmation hormonal treatment and treatment for menstrual suppression when gender affirming hormones are not successful in eliminating menses.

Gender confirmation surgery is rarely appropriate for patients under the age of 18. Requests for mastectomy for female to male transgender individuals age 17 or older may be considered only in exceptional circumstances on an individual consideration basis.

When Gender Confirmation Surgery and Hormone Therapy are not covered

Gender Confirmation Surgery and hormone therapy are non-covered benefits when the member does not have benefits for the services requested contained in their health benefit plan.

Gender Confirmation Surgery and hormonal therapy are considered not medically necessary for plans offering gender confirmation services when the candidate criteria and provider documentation criteria are not met.

Gender Confirmation Surgery Exclusions:

Services and procedures that are considered Cosmetic in all benefit plans are considered non-covered benefits, including but not limited to:

- Cosmetic services that may be used for gender confirmation, including, but not limited to, procedures such as: plastic surgery of the nose; face lift; lip enhancement; facial bone reduction; plastic surgery of the eyelids; liposuction of the waist; reduction of the thyroid cartilage; hair removal; hair transplants; and surgery of the larynx, including shortening of the vocal cords; chin implants; nose implants, and lip reduction.
- Fertility preservation, including but not limited to: sperm banking and embryonic freezing.

Autologous tissue flap breast reconstructions are considered not medically necessary for gender confirmation surgery.

Policy Guidelines

Gender confirmation surgery and hormone therapy candidate criteria and care standards are based, in part, on the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and Endocrine Society Guidelines for Treatment of Transsexual Persons.

Billing/Coding/Physician Documentation Information

This policy may apply to the following codes. Inclusion of a code in this section does not guarantee that it will be reimbursed. For further information on reimbursement guidelines, please see Administrative Policies on the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina web site at www.bcbsnc.com. They are listed in the Category Search on the Medical Policy search page.

ICD-10 diagnosis codes: F64.0, Z87.890

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Applicable codes: 19304, 19316, 19318, 19324, 19325, 19340, 54400, 54401, 54405, 54406, 54408, 54410, 54411, 54415, 54416, 54417, 54660, 55175, 55180, 55970, 55980, 56800, 56805, 57291, 57292, 57295, 57296, 57335, C1813, C2622, J1950, J3315, J9217, J9219, J9226.

Applicable non-covered procedure codes, including, but not limited to: 11950, 11951, 11952, 11954, 15775, 15776, 15780, 15781, 15782, 15783, 15786, 15787, 15788, 15789, 15792, 15793, 15820, 15821, 15822, 15823, 15824, 15825, 15826, 15828, 15829, 15830, 15832, 15833, 15834, 15835, 15836, 15837, 15838, 15839, 15876, 15877, 15878, 15879, 17380, 21120, 21121, 21122, 21123, 21125, 21127, 21208, 21210, 21270, 30400, 30410, 30420, 30430, 30435, 30450, 67900, 92507, 92508.

BCBSNC may request medical records for determination of medical necessity. When medical records are requested, letters of support and/or explanation are often useful, but are not sufficient documentation unless all specific information needed to make a medical necessity determination is included.

Scientific Background and Reference Sources

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition. Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR). American Psychiatric Association. American Psychiatric Association, Inc. July 2000

Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc (2001). Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders—Sixth Version. *International Journal of Transgenderism 5 (1)*. Available at: http://www.symposion.com/ijt/soc_2001/index.htm

Day P. Trans-gender Reassignment Surgery. Tech Brief Series. New Zealand Health Technology Assessment. NZHTA Report February 2002, volume 1, Number 1. Available at: http://nzhta.chmeds.ac.nz/publications/trans_gender.pdf

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The World Professional Association for Transgender Health; Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People; 7th Version; July 2012. Accessed at http://www.wpath.org/site_page.cfm?pk_association_webpage_menu=1351&pk_association_webpage=4655 on 9/21/2016.

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 12/2012

American Psychiatric Association (APA). Gender dysphoria. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5™)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing; 2013: 451-459.

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Healthcare for transgender individuals. Committee Opinion. No 512. December 2011. *Obstet Gynecol* 2011; 118:1454-8.

Hembree WC, Cohen-Kettenis P, et al. Endocrine Treatment of Transsexual Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*. September 2009, 94(9):3132–3154. Accessed at <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/pdf/10.1210/jc.2009-0345> on 9/21/2016.

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 11/2014

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 11/2015

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 9/2016

Senior Medical Director review 9/2016

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 5/2017

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Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 5/2018

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel 6/2019

Policy Implementation/Update Information

- 7/19/11 New policy developed. When benefits for gender reassignment surgery are available, coverage may vary. Some benefit plans provide coverage without a requirement for prior approval or medical necessity review. Benefits for upper and/or lower body gender reassignment procedures vary by benefit plan. If prior authorization and medical necessity review are required for hormone therapy, breast augmentation surgery (mammoplasty), and mastectomy for the treatment of gender identity disorders, the medical criteria and guidelines outlined in the policy will be utilized to determine the medical necessity for the requested procedure or treatment. (adn)
- 9/18/12 Added diagnosis codes 302.0, 302.5, 302.50 – 302.53, 302.6, 302.85, 302.9, 313.82, 752.7 to Billing/Coding section. (sk)
- 1/1/13 Reference added. Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 12/4/12. No change to policy statement. (sk)
- 7/1/13 ICD-10 diagnosis codes added to Billing/Coding section. (sk)
- 10/29/13 Reference added. Replaced DSM-IV TR criteria with DSM-5™ criteria. Removed “Sex change surgical procedures other than breast augmentation surgery (mammoplasty) and mastectomy” from the When Not Covered section. Added “pelvic reconstruction” to the When Covered section. Applicable Service Codes removed from Billing/Coding section. Senior Medical Director review. (sk)
- 7/1/14 Removed ICD-10 effective date from Billing/Coding section. (sk)
- 12/9/14 Reference added. Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 11/24/14. No change to policy statement. (sk)
- 12/30/15 Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 11/18/2015. (sk)
- 9/30/16 Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 9/2016. Policy re-titled to Gender Confirmation Surgery and Hormone Therapy. Information regarding coverage of services for adolescents added to the “When Covered” section. Fertility preservation, including but not limited to: sperm banking and embryonic freezing added to Non-covered section. ICD 9 codes removed from Billing/Coding section. ICD 10 codes, covered codes and non-covered codes added to Billing/Coding section. Policy noticed 10/1/2016 for policy effective date 1/1/2017. (sk)
- 6/30/17 Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 5/31/2017. (sk)
- 6/29/18 Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 5/23/2018. (sk)
- 7/16/19 Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 6/28/2019. (sk)

Medical policy is not an authorization, certification, explanation of benefits or a contract. Benefits and eligibility are determined before medical guidelines and payment guidelines are applied. Benefits are determined by the group contract and subscriber certificate that is in effect at the time services are rendered. This document is solely provided for informational purposes only and is based on research of current medical literature and review of common medical practices in the treatment and diagnosis of disease. Medical practices and knowledge are constantly changing and BCBSNC reserves the right to review and revise its medical policies periodically.

