



HEALTH SERVICES – INSURED HEALTH & HEARING SERVICES		
SECTION: Physician Claims	TITLE: Criteria for Coverage of Gender Affirming Surgery	POLICY #: PC 004
DATE ISSUED: Oct. 5, 2017	CROSS REFERENCE:	MANUAL:
DATE REVISED: April 30, 2018	LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: <i>Health Care Insurance Plan Act and Regulations</i> <i>Travel for Medical Treatment Act and Regulations</i>	

DEFINITIONS:

'Director' means the director of the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan appointed as per section 4(1) of the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act*.

'Client' means a person who is eligible for and entitled to insured health services as defined in the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act*.

Gender Dysphoria: Discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics).

Gender Affirming Surgery: Surgery to change primary and/or secondary sex characteristics to affirm a person's gender identity.

Chest Surgery: surgery that removes breast tissue and sculpts remaining tissue into a shape that is typically considered to be more masculine.

Genital Surgery: surgical alteration of the genitals including the gonadectomy procedures of hysterectomy/salpingo-oophorectomy and orchiectomy and the reconstructive procedures of metoidioplasty, penectomy, phalloplasty, and vaginoplasty.

Chief Assessor for British Columbia: Gail Knudson, MD, MPE, FRCPC, Clinical Associate Professor, University of British Columbia Medical Lead, Transgender Health Information Program, Vancouver Coastal Health or as appointed by the Province of British Columbia.

Medical Advisor for Yukon: The Medical Advisor for Yukon is responsible for the medical accuracy and acceptability practices and procedures carried out by the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan. The Medical Advisor for Yukon is responsible for ensuring that requests are medically indicated.

Qualified Assessors: are healthcare practitioners designated by the Chief Assessor for British Columbia as qualified to conduct surgical readiness assessments.

Most Responsible Physician (MRP): generally, refers to the physician who has overall responsibility for directing and coordinating the care and management of an individual patient at a specific point in time.

BACKGROUND:

This policy applies to those eligible clients insured as defined by the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan Act, who are seeking gender affirming surgery.

All of the criteria outlined in this policy as applicable to any one gender affirming surgery procedure must be met in order for the procedure to be found to be medically required, as required under the *Health Care Insurance Plan Regulations*.

Only those services defined as “physician services” under the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan Act are deemed to be insured benefits for eligible plan beneficiaries.

As per the Canada Health Act 8(1) (a) “the health care insurance plan of a province must be administered and operated on a non-profit basis by a public authority...” therefore, services performed in private facilities are typically non-insured. However, gender affirming surgical procedures for the treatment of gender dysphoria are only performed in a private medical clinic in Montreal. Yukon’s *Regulations Respecting the Hospital Insurance Services Act* stipulates that hospitals outside of Yukon can be used for the provision of insured services if the hospital is licensed or approved by the competent authority of the province in which it is located. Since the private clinic in Montreal is a publicly funded health service in Quebec, then Insured Health Services is able to fund surgical procedures at this facility under the current regulations.

1.0 SCOPE

1.1 Application

This policy and associated documents applies to all funding requests for gender affirming surgery made to Insured Health Services.

1.2 Purpose

This policy outlines the criteria, application process, and insured services related to all funding requests for gender affirming surgery submitted to Insured Health Services.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 General

At the present time, chest surgeries are available and performed in British Columbia.

At the present time, these genital surgeries are performed in Whitehorse:

- Hysterectomy
- Salpingo-oophorectomy

At the present time, the following genital surgeries are performed in British Columbia, Alberta, or at the Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS) Clinic in Montreal:

- Orchiectomy

At the present time, these genital surgeries are performed at the GRS Clinic in Montreal:

- Metoidioplasty
- Penectomy
- Phalloplasty
- Vaginoplasty

2.2 Criteria

Clients applying for gender affirming surgery must meet the following criteria before being approved:

2.2.1 Criteria for chest surgery

1. Have a valid Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan number;
2. Persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria as determined by **one** Qualified Assessor;
3. Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to give consent for treatment. Consent must be given freely, and with full understanding of the procedure(s) involved, and the potential risks and harms;
4. At least 18 years of age;

5. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be reasonable well controlled.

2.2.2 Criteria for genital surgery

The criteria for genital surgery are specific to the type of surgery being requested.

2.2.2.1 Criteria for gonadectomy (hysterectomy/salpingo-oophorectomy and orchiectomy):

1. Have a valid Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan number;
2. Persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria as determined by **two** Qualified Assessors;
3. Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to give consent for treatment. Consent must be given freely, and with full understanding of the procedure(s) involved, and the potential risks and harms;
4. At least 18 years of age;
5. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be well controlled;
6. Where hormone therapy is clinically indicated for the patient's gender goals, twelve continuous months of hormone therapy are required.

2.2.2.2 Criteria for genital reconstructive surgery (metoidioplasty, penectomy, phalloplasty and vaginoplasty):

1. Have a valid Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan number;
2. Persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria as determined by **two** Qualified Assessors;
3. Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to give consent for treatment. Consent must be given freely, and with full understanding of the procedure(s) involved, and the potential risks and harms;
4. At least 18 years of age;
5. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be well controlled;
6. Twelve continuous months of hormone therapy as appropriate to the patient's gender goals (unless hormones are not clinically indicated for the individual);

7. Twelve continuous months of living in a gender role that is congruent with the individual's gender identity.

2.3 Application Overview

The Most Responsible Physician (MRP) will send a referral for a surgical readiness assessment to the Office of the Chief Assessor for British Columbia or a qualified assessor. This process is intended to ensure that the client is prepared for the surgery and will have the best possible post-surgical outcomes. Surgical readiness assessments are part of the current WPATH Standards of Care to be eligible for gender-affirming surgery. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) sets the criteria for gender-affirming surgeries in a document called Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Non-Conforming People.

The client will undergo a consultation with one or two Qualified Assessors:

- I. one assessment for chest surgery as defined in this Policy,
- II. two assessments for hysterectomy/salpingo-oophorectomy, orchiectomy, metoidioplasty, penectomy, phalloplasty, or vaginoplasty;

The Chief Assessor for British Columbia or a qualified assessor will confirm and provide written documentation of a diagnosis of gender dysphoria to the MRP.

2.3.1 Application Process

1. The MRP will seek preapproval from Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan for the surgical consultation for gender affirming surgery. The request should be accompanied by a report from the assessor confirming diagnosis of gender dysphoria.”;

2. Should the request for gender affirming surgery be deemed medically necessary and an insured benefit, an appointment will be arranged by the MRP with the relevant physician for a surgical consultation only.

- I. For chest surgery, client is referred to a plastic surgeon for surgery in British Columbia;
- II. For hysterectomy/salpingo-oophorectomy, the patient is referred to a gynecologist for surgery in Whitehorse;
- III. For orchiectomy, client is referred to a plastic surgeon or urologist for surgery in British Columbia, Alberta, or to the

GRS Clinic in Montreal to undergo orchiectomy at the same time as other gender affirming surgical procedures;

IV. For metoidioplasty, penectomy, phalloplasty, and vaginoplasty, client is referred to the GRS Clinic in Montreal.

3. A copy of the surgical consultation is to be provided to Insured Health and Hearing Services for review by the Medical Advisor for Yukon.

4. Should the request for gender affirming surgery be approved by the Medical Advisor for Yukon, the surgery will be arranged by the client or the MRP with the relevant physician or surgeon.

Note: Authorizations for consultations and for surgeries remain valid for **one year from the date of approval by the Chief Assessor for British Columbia**, after which re-application is required.

2.4 Approved Medical Procedures relating to Gender Affirming Surgeries

The following surgical procedures are insured by Yukon Insured Health and Hearing Services:

- mastectomy with chest contouring;
- gonadectomy procedures including hysterectomy/salpingo-oophorectomy and orchiectomy;
- genital reconstructive surgery including metoidioplasty, penectomy, phalloplasty and vaginoplasty.

2.5 Medical Procedures relating to Gender Affirming Surgeries to be Reviewed on Case-by-Case Merit

The following are some procedures that are not generally medically required:

- Augmentation mammoplasty
- Facial reconstruction
- Electrolysis
- Thyroid cartilage reduction
- Voice surgery
- Other non-genital, non-breast procedures

Yukon Insured Health and Hearing Services may fund round trip medical travel within Canada for pre-approved hospital, physician and anesthetic services (including the consultations and assessments) relating to Gender Affirming Surgery for those clients meeting the criteria, as outlined in section 2.2, and one pre-approved escort if deemed medically required.

3.0 APPEALS

Appeals regarding coverage of pre-approvals to see a surgeon and for final approval of gender affirming surgeries are to be sent, in writing, to the Director of Insured Health and Hearing Services for review. Letters should be addressed as follows:

Director, Insured Health and Hearing Services (H-2)
Department of Health and Social Services
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 2C6

Note: All requirements of the Acts and Regulations governing Yukon Health and Hearing Services shall remain in effect. All decisions on interpretation will be referred to the Director of Insured Health and Hearing Services.

APPROVED BY:  May 1, 2018
Shauna Demers, Director Date
Insured Health and Hearing Services