

2SLGBTQQIA+ Gender Affirming Care for Service Users

Gender-affirming care is the care that supports a client, patient, or service user's experience that is appropriate for their gender and/or sexual orientation. Having a positive, affirming and respectful experience is important for anyone accessing health or social services, but it is especially important for 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals accessing health or social services. These experiences have a direct impact on health and wellbeing and if the services will be accessed again.

There are a few options to help you with your gender expression and gender identity, if you so choose. Whether you choose to access these options or not is entirely up to you. Your gender identity and gender expression is completely individual. Choosing not to access these options also does not make you any less of the person you are and aspire to be. You are in control of how expressive and visible you choose to be. The following are options that may help with your expression and identity.

Beginning a Medical Transition

You might be aware that there are medical capabilities to help align your gender identity. If this is something you are interested in then researching and understanding what your desired outcomes are, is your first step in the process. Contact your primary healthcare provider to see how they can support you with a medical transition. If you are comfortable enough to do so, be open and honest about what kind of treatment you are looking for. If you are more comfortable speaking to a specialist or provider with their own lived experience, your primary healthcare provider can refer you to someone else. Everything is assessed on a case-by-case basis and support from your family may be beneficial if that is something that is helpful and healthy for you.

Gender-Affirming Surgery

Surgical care can have benefits for some individuals. Depending on your age and stage of development some surgeries may be better suited for you. Upper body surgeries may be more suitable for youth under the age of majority depending on the length of your transition. No one else can dictate the validity of your transition but assessments and criteria still need to be met for access to surgeries. There will be lots of questions for you to answer but answering as open and truthfully as possible will help the

process. If at any time you find that the healthcare provider you have is not adequately supporting your needs and desires, you have the right to ask for a referral or alternative provider that may best suit you throughout this process.

Feminizing/Masculinizing Hormone Therapies

You maybe familiar with the hormone related therapies such as estrogen-based therapy and testosterone-based therapy. You may also be familiar with puberty suppression medication which is also a prescription-based option. These prescriptions work by increasing certain hormones in the body or blocking them. Depending on assessments, some youth do not need parental permission to access this treatment. In Ontario, physicians can prescribe these therapies to youth. In some cases, hormone therapy is primary health care. These therapies may be beneficial to some individuals but not all.

PrEP or PeP

PrEP and PeP are primarily used for the prevention of HIV exposure but there are also other reasons that one might wish to access preventative treatment such as measures to control one's own sexual health and reduce anxiety about HIV exposure. If you wish to be preventative and or want more knowledge on HIV and prevention, contact your primary healthcare provider. Regardless of sexual partner, HIV is transmitted through bodily fluids. It is important to keep up to date on testing and treatments to best support your health and your sexual partner(s).

What is covered?

Provincial Coverage

Depending on your location, your province may have varying levels of coverage for gender affirmation treatment and supports. Most services and treatments should be covered under the provincial coverage granted to inhabitants. For example, in Ontario OHIP covers hormone therapies and some surgeries. British Columbia and the Yukon are known to have some of the best coverage. Check with your Provincial Health Authority website to see what specific gender-affirming care is offered to you.

First Nations coverage

Indigenous individuals can receive gender-affirming health benefits and mental health support from the First Nations Health Authority. Many gender-affirming surgeries are covered under these benefits as well as some medical supplies and travel expenses. They can also provide gender affirming items such as binders, packers, dilators, breast forms, gaffs, etc. Medication including medications for hormone therapy are offered as well. If an individual is not able to access benefits from the First Nations Health Authority, expenses can be expended through the federal Non-Insured Health Benefits Program. Alternative funding may also be covered through association with individual bands.