

Medical Coverage Policy | Gender Reassignment Surgery



EFFECTIVE DATE: 01 | 01 | 2021

POLICY LAST UPDATED: 04 | 07 | 2021

OVERVIEW

The policy documents the coverage and guidelines for Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS) applicable to Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial products.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

None

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Prior authorization is required for Medicare Advantage Plans and recommended for Commercial groups.

POLICY STATEMENT

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

Preauthorization is required for Medicare Advantage Plans and recommended for Commercial products to determine if the member is eligible for coverage and to assist in maximizing the benefit.

When a benefit for gender reassignment surgery exists, it is considered medically necessary when the documentation submitted confirms that all of the following criteria are met:

- The individual has been diagnosed with the gender identity disorder (GID) or gender dysphoria of transsexualism
- The individual has successfully lived and worked within the desired gender role full-time for at least 12 months (real-life experience) without returning to the original gender

Surgical Treatment for Gender Reassignment

When a covered benefit for gender reassignment surgery exists and all of the above eligibility criteria are met, the following surgeries are medically necessary for transwomen (male to female):

- Orchiectomy
- Penectomy
- Vaginoplasty
- Colovaginoplasty
- Clitoroplasty
- Labiaplasty
- Breast Augmentation Note: augmentation mammoplasty (including breast prosthesis if necessary) if the physician prescribing hormones and the surgeon have documented that breast enlargement after undergoing hormone treatment for 12 months is not sufficient for comfort in the social role
- Trachea shave/reduction thyroid chondroplasty: reduction of the thyroid cartilage (31899)

When a covered benefit for gender reassignment surgery exists and all of the above eligibility criteria are met, the following surgeries are medically necessary for transmen (female to male):

- Breast reconstruction
- Reduction mammoplasty
- Hysterectomy
- Salpingo-oophorectomy

- Colpectomy/Vaginectomy
- Metoidioplasty
- Phalloplasty
- Urethroplasty
- Scrotoplasty
- Testicular implants

Other services (e.g., laboratory, pharmacy, radiology, or behavioral health services) are covered according to the plan design.

Commercial Products

Hair removal procedures to treat tissue donor sites for a planned phalloplasty or vaginoplasty procedure is considered medically necessary; in all other situations it is cosmetic and noncovered.

Procedures that are considered cosmetic are not covered. Please refer to the Cosmetic Services and Procedures policy in the related policy section for a list of those services.

Medicare Advantage Plans

Hair removal procedures to treat tissue donor sites for a planned phalloplasty or vaginoplasty procedure is considered medically necessary, in all other situations it is cosmetic and noncovered.

Cosmetic surgery or expenses incurred in connection with such surgery is not covered. Cosmetic surgery includes any surgical procedure directed at improving appearance, except when required for the prompt (i.e., as soon as medically feasible) repair of accidental injury or for the improvement of the functioning of a malformed body member.

COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable surgery/gender reassignment benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND

Gender identity disorder is the formal diagnosis used by professionals to describe persons who experience significant gender dysphoria (discontent with their biological sex and/or birth gender).

DSM V uses the term “gender dysphoria” instead of GID because of stigmatization associated with the term gender identity disorder. Additionally, the diagnosis grouping has been moved out of the sexual disorder category and moved into its own.

DSM V criteria:

1. Discomfort with one’s assigned sex or gender role for period of at least six months, as manifested by at least two of the following indicators:
 - a. Feeling of incongruence between one’s felt gender identity and one’s primary and secondary sex characteristics;
 - b. Desire to be rid of one primary and secondary sex characteristics;
 - c. Desire for the sex characteristics of the other sex;
 - d. Desire to be the other sex;
 - e. Desire to be treated as the other sex;
 - f. Belief that one has the feelings and reactions typical of the other sex.
2. The individual does not have an intersex or developmental condition;
3. The condition causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning;

4. “Gender identity disorder not otherwise specified” is proposed to include individuals who cannot be diagnosed as having a specific gender identity disorder but experience distress and impairment as a result of their gender identity.

In 2010, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) released a statement noting that “the expression of gender characteristics, including identities that are not stereotypically associated with one’s assigned sex at birth is a common and culturally diverse human phenomenon [that] should not be judged as inherently pathological or negative.” Accordingly, transsexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming persons are not intrinsically disordered. Rather, the distress of gender dysphoria, when present, is the matter that may be diagnosable and for which several therapeutic options are available.

Gender reassignment surgery is one treatment option. GRS 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 GRS, candidates need to undergo important medical and psychological evaluations, and begin medical therapies and behavioral trials to confirm that surgery is the most appropriate treatment choice.

Therapeutic approaches include psychological interventions and gender reassignment therapy, including hormonal interventions that masculinize or feminize the body, and surgical interventions that change the genitalia and other sex characteristics. Gender identity disorders may manifest at childhood, adolescence, or adulthood.

The surgical procedures for male-to-female individuals, also known as “transwomen” may include: orchiectomy, penectomy, vaginoplasty, clitoroplasty, labioplasty breast augmentation, trachea shave/reduction thyroid chondroplasty, and techniques include penile skin inversion, pedicled colosigmoid transplant, and free skin grafts to line the neovagina. For female-to male persons, also known as “transmen” surgery may include hysterectomy, ovariectomy, vaginectomy, salpingoophorectomy, metoidioplasty, scrotoplasty, urethroplasty, placement of testicular prostheses, and phalloplasty.

Prior to surgery, patients typically undergo hormone replacement therapy for a period of 12 continuous months. Transmen are treated with testosterone to increase muscle and bone mass, decrease breast size, increase clitoris size, increase facial and body hair, arrest menses, and deepen the voice. Transwomen are treated with anti-androgens and estrogens to increase percentage of body fat compared to muscle mass, decrease body hair, decrease testicular size, decrease erectile function, and increase breast size.

Individuals diagnosed with GID also must undertake real-life experience living in the identity-congruent gender role. This provides sufficient opportunity for patients to experience and socially adjust in their desired role before undergoing irreversible surgery. During this experience, patients should present themselves consistently, on a day-to-day basis and across all life settings, in their desired gender role. Changing gender role can have profound personal and social consequences, and individuals must demonstrate an awareness of the challenges and the ability to function successfully in their gender role.

In 2009 the Endocrine Society published a clinical practice guideline for endocrine treatment of transsexual persons (Hembree, et al., 2009). As part of this guideline, the endocrine society recommends that transsexual persons consider genital sex reassignment surgery only after both the physician responsible for endocrine transition therapy and the mental health professional find surgery advisable; that surgery be recommended only after completion of at least one year of consistent and compliant hormone treatment; and that the physician responsible for endocrine treatment advise the individual for sex reassignment surgery and collaborate with the surgeon regarding hormone use during and after surgery.

Sex reassignment surgical procedures for diagnosed cases of GID should be recommended only after a comprehensive evaluation by a qualified mental health professional. The surgeon should have a demonstrated competency and extensive training in sexual reconstructive surgery. Long-term follow-up is highly recommended.

Comprehensive evaluation is generally supported by the following documentation:

1. Letters that attest to the psychological aspects of the candidate's GID.
 - a. One of the letters must be from a behavioral health professional with a doctoral degree (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 physician or behavioral health provider, who has treated the candidate for a minimum of 12 months (Note: if the candidate has not been treated continuously by one clinician for 12 months but has transferred care from one clinician to a second clinician, then both clinicians must submit documentation and their combined treatment must have been for 12 months). The letter or letters must document the following:
 - i. Whether the author of the letter is part of a gender identity disorder treatment team; and
 - ii. The candidate's general identifying characteristics; and
 - iii. The initial and evolving gender, sexual, and other psychiatric diagnoses; and
 - iv. The duration of their professional relationship including the type of psychotherapy or evaluation that the candidate underwent; and
 - v. The eligibility criteria that have been met by the candidate; and
 - vi. The physician or mental health professional's rationale for surgery; and
 - vii. The degree to which the candidate has followed the treatment and experiential requirements to date and the likelihood of future compliance; and
 - viii. 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
 - ix. That during the 12-month, real-life experience, 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. For candidates not meeting the 12-month eligibility criteria, the letter should still comment on the candidate's ability to function and experience in the desired gender role.
 - x. That the candidate has, intends to, or is in the process of acquiring a legal gender identity-appropriate name change; and
 - xi. Demonstrable progress on the part of the candidate in consolidating the new gender identity, including improvements in the ability to handle:
 1. Work, family, and interpersonal issues;
 2. Behavioral health issues, should they exist. This implies satisfactory control of issues such as:
 - a. Sociopathy
 - b. Substance abuse
 - c. Psychosis
 - d. Suicidality
 - 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. 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:

- i. The candidate meets the eligibility criteria listed in this policy; and
- ii. The treating surgeon feels that the candidate is likely to benefit from surgery; and
- iii. The surgeon has personally communicated with the treating mental health provider or physician treating the candidate; and
- iv. The surgeon has personally communicated with the candidate and that the candidate understands the ramifications or surgery.

CODING

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

The following codes, when done for the purpose of gender reassignment are covered when the criteria are met:

- 19301** Mastectomy, partial
- 19303** Mastectomy, simple, complete
- 19316** Mastopexy
- 19318** Breast Reduction
- 19324** Mammoplasty, augmentation; without prosthetic implant
- 19325** Breast augmentation with implant
- 19350** Nipple/areola reconstruction
- 31899** Unlisted procedure, trachea, bronchi
- 53430** Urethroplasty, reconstruction of female urethra
- 54125** Amputation of penis; complete
- 54520** Orchiectomy, simple (including subcapsular), with or without testicular prosthesis, scrotal or inguinal approach
- 54660** Insertion of testicular prosthesis (separate procedure) (Effective 1/1/21 as groups renew)
- 54690** Laparoscopy, surgical; orchiectomy
- 55175** Scrotoplasty; simple
- 55180** Scrotoplasty; complicated
- 55899** Phalloplasty
- 56625** Vulvectomy simple; complete
- 56800** Plastic repair of introitus
- 56805** Clitoroplasty for intersex state
- 56810** Perineoplasty, repair of perineum, nonobstetrical (separate procedure)
- 57106** Vaginectomy, partial removal of vaginal wall
- 57107** Vaginectomy, partial removal of vaginal wall; with removal of paravaginal tissue (radical vaginectomy)
- 57110** Vaginectomy, complete removal of vaginal wall
- 57111** Vaginectomy, complete removal of vaginal wall; with removal of paravaginal tissue (radical vaginectomy)
- 57291** Construction of artificial vagina; without graft
- 57292** Construction of artificial vagina; with graft
- 57335** Vaginoplasty for intersex state
- 58150** Total abdominal hysterectomy (corpus and cervix), with or without removal of tube(s), with or without removal of ovary(s)
- 58180** Supracervical abdominal hysterectomy (subtotal hysterectomy), with or without removal of tube(s), with or without removal of ovary(s)
- 58260** Vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less
- 58262** Vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less; with removal of tube(s), and/or ovary(s)
- 58275** Vaginal hysterectomy, with total or partial vaginectomy
- 58280** Vaginal hysterectomy, with total or partial vaginectomy; with repair of enterocele
- 58285** Vaginal hysterectomy, radical (Schauta type operation)

- 58290 Vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g
- 58291 Vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g; with removal of tube(s) and/or ovary(s)
- 58541 Laparoscopy, surgical, supracervical hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less
- 58542 Laparoscopy, surgical, supracervical hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less; with removal of tube(s) and/or ovary(s)
- 58543 Laparoscopy, surgical, supracervical hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g
- 58544 Laparoscopy, surgical, supracervical hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g; with removal of tube(s) and/or ovary(s)
- 58550 Laparoscopy, surgical, with vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less
- 58552 Laparoscopy, surgical, with vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less; with removal of tube(s) and/or ovary(s)
- 58553 Laparoscopy, surgical, with vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g
- 58554 Laparoscopy, surgical, with vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g; with removal of tube(s) and/or ovary(s)
- 58570 Laparoscopy, surgical, with total hysterectomy, for uterus 250 g or less;
- 58571 Hysterectomy
- 58572 Laparoscopy, surgical, with total hysterectomy, for uterus greater than 250 g;
- 58573 Hysterectomy
- 58661 Salpingo-oophorectomy
- 58999 Labiaplasty

Claims for laser hair removal:

To ensure correct claims processing, claim meeting the criteria for coverage in this policy must be submitted with the following unlisted code

- 17999 Unlisted procedure, skin, mucous membrane and subcutaneous tissue

The following CPT codes are not to be used for pricing or claims processing. Claims should be filed with the specific procedures:

- 55970 Intersex surgery; male to female
- 55980 Intersex surgery; female to male

RELATED POLICIES

Cosmetic Services and Procedures

PUBLISHED

- Provider Update, June 2021
- Provider Update, January 2021
- Provider Update, January 2020
- Provider Update, September 2018
- Provider Update, June 2016

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