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## **Information on Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) and Trans Health Care in Ontario**

**Provided by the SRS and Trans Health Policy Group, July 2009**

The SRS and Trans Health Policy Group is a group of health care organizations (Sherbourne Health Centre, The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) and trans community groups (The Trans Health Lobby Group of Rainbow Health Network and TransPULSE Research Study). We have been asked to provide consultation to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care with regard to improving the health care system for transsexual and transgendered persons. The Group had a productive first meeting with officials from the MOHLTC on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2009 and has a further meeting scheduled in the fall of 2009. The results of our consultations will be reported as information becomes available.

In the course of our discussions, however, it has come to our attention that clear information on the *current* status of SRS in Ontario and related health care for trans patients under the Ontario's Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) has not been readily accessible. We have produced this Frequently Asked Questions document to help address these issues.

### **Frequently Asked Questions about SRS and Trans Health Care**

#### **1. Has Sex Reassignment Surgery been re-listed as an OHIP covered procedure?**

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care re-listed Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) as an OHIP covered procedure for approved individuals. Bulletin 4480 (below), issued on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2008 was distributed to physicians, hospitals and labs to announce this change in policy. It is posted on the MOHLTC website at [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bulletin\\_4000\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bulletin_4000_mn.html)

#### **2. Who provides approvals for OHIP covered SRS?**

At present, the Ministry has directed that the approval process for this surgery may only be carried out by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) in Toronto. For details of the Clinic's services and approach, see [http://www.camh.net/Care\\_Treatment/Program\\_Descriptions/Mental\\_Health\\_Programs/Gender\\_Identity\\_Clinic/gender\\_identity\\_criteriasurgery.html](http://www.camh.net/Care_Treatment/Program_Descriptions/Mental_Health_Programs/Gender_Identity_Clinic/gender_identity_criteriasurgery.html)

### **3. What kinds of surgical body changing procedures does OHIP cover for approved sex reassignment surgery?**

#### **Male to Female Sex Reassignment Surgery**

- Vaginoplasty - removal of male genitals, construction of vagina, labia, clitoris

#### **Female to Male Sex Reassignment Surgery**

- Mastectomy - removal of breasts and chest reconstruction
- Metoidioplasty/Phalloplasty – (two different options) freeing of the clitoris and construction of testes, or removal of female genitals, construction of male genitals
- Hysterectomy - removal of uterus and ovaries upon recommendation by GIC at CAMH as part of transition.

### **4. Are there body changing procedures that are not covered by OHIP?**

OHIP does not provide coverage for the following procedures:

- Breast implants
- Facial surgeries such as lip augmentation, lip reduction, jaw shortening, rhinoplasty (nose reshaping)
- Neck or vocal chord surgery
- Hair transplants
- Electrolysis (removal of beard or body hair)
- Male chest contouring unless part of a mastectomy procedure
- Liposuction

### **5. Where are approved SRS patients referred for their surgical procedures?**

Patients who meet eligibility requirements for OHIP funding are referred to The Centre Metropolitain de Chirurgie Plastique in Montreal, Quebec. See their website at <http://www.grsmontreal.com.html>.

In exceptional circumstances, OHIP will sometimes cover the cost of Out of Country services but this is only where the service is insured by OHIP, the service is not available within Ontario or delay in accessing services would result in medically significant irreversible tissue damage or death. Those wishing to pursue surgical options outside Canada still require a referral from CAMH's GIC and the CAMH physician will need to complete a "Prior Approval Application for Full payment of Insured Out-of-Country Health Services" form. More information on seeking OHIP insured services out-of-country can be accessed at

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry\\_services.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry_services.html).

If you are uncertain as to whether or not the services you are seeking would be covered by OHIP, please contact the Ministry in writing prior to accessing services.

### **6. Is there a waiting list to be seen at CAMH's Gender Identity Clinic?**

Due to high demand, there may be a waiting list for the initial visit with the GIC in Toronto. Once approval has been granted, the referral is sent to OHIP. An OHIP representative then advises the client of the approval and sends copies to the surgeons in Montreal. Scheduling decisions are then made between the client and the Montreal Clinic.

**7. What if I live in an area that is far from the GIC in Toronto? Is there funding for travel expenses?**

If you live in Northern Ontario you may qualify for a Northern Travel Grant which will assist you with travel costs and accommodation if required. You must receive a referral from a Northern Health Care practitioner. More information on this grant may be accessed at <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ohip/northern.html>

**8. Where can I get other kinds of care like hormone therapy, counselling, or find a support group?**

Ontario does not yet have an accessible, integrated network of care for trans people, but many do find services at health centres, family health teams and family doctors' offices. Some physicians will send you for a consultation with a psychiatrist or an endocrinologist before prescribing hormones but this is not always necessary.

The TransPULSE research project has created a Canadian Resource Directory which can be accessed at [http://www.transpulse.ca/documents/Trans\\_PULSE\\_Resource\\_List.html](http://www.transpulse.ca/documents/Trans_PULSE_Resource_List.html). Rainbow Health Ontario is also building an interactive directory of LGBT service providers so check out <http://www.RainbowHealthOntario.ca.html>.

Support groups and social clubs for trans people can be found in many cities and even in some smaller centres. They may also know where you can find health care services. Another useful resource for information on trans human rights and community organizing is the Rainbow Health Network <http://www.rainbowhealthnetwork.ca/transhealth.html>.

**9. Are hormones covered by OHIP?**

Hormones are like any other prescription medication. They are either paid for by the patient, a company health insurance program or, for those who qualify, a government program such as the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. For ODBP coverage, your doctor must complete a Request for an Unlisted Drug Product-ICR form. It only needs to be filled out once and is available at [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/forms/form\\_menus/odb\\_fm.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/forms/form_menus/odb_fm.html)

**10. Where can I or my doctor find reliable materials on gender transition?**

Many health practitioners follow the guidelines suggested by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health [http://www.wpath.org/resources\\_transgender.cfm.html](http://www.wpath.org/resources_transgender.cfm.html). These guidelines known as the WPATH Standards of Care are published on-line at [http://www.symposion.com/ijt/soc\\_2001/index.html](http://www.symposion.com/ijt/soc_2001/index.html). A wide range of protocols describing practice in a Canadian context can be accessed through the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority <http://www.vch.ca/transhealth/resources/careguidelines.html>. Sherbourne Health Centre has also recently published its protocols for providing hormonal therapy and other services within a primary health care setting, see <http://www.sherbourne.on.ca.html>.

**On the following page you will find the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Bulletin on the re-listing of SRS.**

Bulletin 4480 issued on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2008 was distributed to physicians, hospitals and labs and reads as follows

# Bulletin

Bulletin Number **4480** Date June 20, 2008

Distribution Physicians, Hospitals, Clinics and Laboratories Direct inquiries to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Processing Sites (address below) Processing Sites

## **Subject: Relisting of Sex Reassignment Surgery under OHIP**

Effective June 3, 2008, Regulation 552 of the *Health Insurance Act* (HIA) has been amended to add sex reassignment surgery (SRS) as an insured service under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

Sex-reassignment surgical procedures, including reconstruction of genitalia and mastectomy, are an insured benefit effective June 3, 2008 only if they are performed on patients who have completed the Gender Identity Clinic program operated by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and for whom the Clinic has recommended that surgery take place.

Within the foregoing guidelines, reconstruction of genitalia and mastectomy are insured benefits. However, since the hormonal treatments associated with sex-reassignment themselves give rise to breast enlargement, augmentation mammoplasty or breast reconstruction in a male to female conversion is not an insured benefit. Prior approval from the MOHLTC is required.

As the Province moves forward in the delivery of SRS services, we want to ensure that we are adopting the most up to date and efficacious techniques to serve the transgender community. To that end, we have sought the advice of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health as well as the Sherbourne Health Centre about using the World Professional Association for Transgendered Health (WPATH) standards of care to inform our implementation strategy.

For services proposed to be received at a hospital or health facility outside Canada, prior approval of the General Manager of OHIP is required. See

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry\\_services.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ohip/outcountry_services.html)

for the application process and requirements.

Bulletins and the updated version of the Schedule of Benefits are available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/>.

This Bulletin is a general summary provided for information purposes only. Physicians, hospitals and other health care providers are directed to review the *Health Insurance Act*, Regulation 552 and the Schedules under that regulation, for the complete text of the provisions. You can access this information on-line at:

[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/). In the event of a conflict or inconsistency between this bulletin and the applicable legislation and/or regulation, the legislation and/or regulation prevail.

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