

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

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[POLICY RATIONALE DISCLAIMER POLICY HISTORY](#)

[PRODUCT VARIATIONS DEFINITIONS CODING INFORMATION APPENDIX](#)

[DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND BENEFIT VARIATIONS REFERENCES](#)

I. POLICY

Gender reassignment surgery may be considered **medically necessary** when **all** of the following pre-procedure criteria are met:

- The individual is 18 years of age or older. Individual consideration may be given to individuals under 18 years old wishing to undergo female to male chest surgery (e.g., mastectomy) after one year of testosterone therapy and when all other criteria are met.
- The individual has been diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria of transsexualism which includes all of the following:
 - Desire to live as a member of the opposite sex, usually through body changes by surgery and hormone treatment.
 - The individual’s transsexual identity has been present for at least two years.
 - Gender Dysphoria causes significant distress and impairs social, occupational, and other important areas of functioning.
- The individual participates in trans-gender counseling and meets **all** of the following:
 - The individual has lived with the desired gender role full time for at least twelve months without returning to the original gender.
 - Initiation of hormone therapy by a qualified health care professional with supportive documentation provided.
 - Recommendation for sex reassignment surgery by two mental health professionals with written documentation submitted to the physician performing the genital surgery. One letter should be from a psychiatrist or Ph.D. clinical psychologist and the second letter from a Master’s degree mental health professional, or both letters could be from psychiatrists or Ph.D. clinical

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

- psychologists. The mental health provider should have experience working with transgender clients. One of these letters should include a comprehensive evaluation/report that details well documented gender dysphoria. (see Appendix)
- The individual has the capacity to make a fully informed decision and to consent for treatment.

Male to Female Gender Reassignment* (55970):

When ALL of the above criteria are met for gender reassignment surgery, the following genital surgeries may be considered medically necessary for transwomen (male to female):

- Breast augmentation (19324, 19325) when one of following additional criteria is met:
 - failure of breast growth stimulation by estrogen (progression only to a young adolescent stage of development), or
 - emergence of serious or intolerable adverse effects during estrogen administration, or
 - medical contraindication to use of estrogen, or
 - risk-benefit analysis determined that surgery is preferable to estrogen therapy.
- Colovaginoplasty (57291, 57292)
- Clitoroplasty (58999)
- Labiaplasty (58999)
- Orchiectomy (54520, 54690)
- Penectomy (54125)
- Vaginoplasty (58999)

Female to Male Gender Reassignment* (55980):

When ALL of the above criteria are met for gender reassignment surgery, the following breast and genital surgeries may be considered **medically necessary** for transmen (female to male):

- Breast reconstruction (e.g., mastectomy) (19303-19304)
- Hysterectomy (58150, 58180, 58260, 58262, 58275, 58290, 58291, 58541, 58542, 58543, 58544, 58550, 58552, 58553, 58554, 58570, 58571, 58572, 58573)
- Metoidioplasty (55899)
- Penile prosthesis insertion (54400, 54401, 54405)
- Phalloplasty (55899)
- Salpingo-oophorectomy (58661, 58720, 58940)
- Scrotoplasty (55175, 55180)
- Testicular prosthesis implantation (54660)
- Urethroplasty (53430)
- Vaginectomy (57110)

MEDICAL POLICY

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

- Vulvectomy, simple, complete (56625)

***Note:** For individuals considering breast surgery, hysterectomy/salpingo-oophorectomy, orchiectomy, vaginectomy or vaginoplasty procedures a total of 12 months continuous hormonal sex reassignment therapy is required unless medically contraindicated. An additional 12 months of hormone therapy is not required for vaginectomy or vaginoplasty procedures if already completed with the first stage of these procedures.

Non-Covered Services:

The following procedures are considered **cosmetic** services and **not medically necessary** when used to improve the gender (this list may not be all-inclusive):

- Abdominoplasty (15830, 15847)
- Blepharoplasty (15820, 15821, 15822, 15823)
- Blepharoptosis (67901, 67902, 67903, 67904, 67906, 67908, 67999)
- Breast augmentation (19324, 19325) for purposes not meeting the above criteria
- Breast reduction, implant, revision/reconstruction (19318, 19340, 19380)
- Brow lift (67900)
- Calf augmentation/implants (17999)
- Cheek/malar implants (21210, 21270)
- Chin augmentation (21120, 21121, 21122, 21123)
- Collagen injections (11950, 11951, 11952, 11954)
- Cricothyroid approximation (21899)
- Dermabrasion/Skin resurfacing (15780, 15781, 15782, 15783, 15786, 15787, 15788, 15789, 15792, 15793)
- Facial feminizing/sculpturing (e.g., jaw shortening, forehead reduction) (21125, 21127, 21137, 21138, 21139, 21141, 21142, 21143, 21145, 21146, 21147, 21150, 21151, 21154, 21155, 21159, 21160, 21172, 21175, 21179, 21180, 21181, 21182, 21183, 21184, 21188, 21193, 21194, 21195, 21196, 21198, 21199, 21206, 21208, 21209, 21210)
- Forehead lift (15824)
- Gamete preservation in anticipation of future infertility (89258, 89259)
- Hair removal – Electrolysis (17380) or laser hair removal (17999)
- Hair transplantation (15775, 15776)
- Laryngoplasty (31599)
- Lip reduction/enhancement (40799)
- Liposuction (15876, 15877, 15878, 15879)
- Mastopexy (19316)
- Nose implants (21210)
- Removal of redundant skin (15830, 15832, 15833, 15834, 15835, 15836, 15837, 15838, 15839)

MEDICAL POLICY

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

- Rhinoplasty (30400, 30410, 30420, 30430, 30435, 30450)
- Rhytidectomy (15824, 15825, 15826, 15828, 15829)
- Scrotoplasty (55175, 55180)
- Trachea shave/reduction thyroid chondroplasty (31899)
- Voice modification surgery (31574, 31591, 31599)
- Voice therapy/voice lessons (92507, 92508)

*Transman to woman or transwoman to man post-operatively is **not covered**.

Cross-reference:

- MP-1.002 Augmentation Mammoplasty
- MP-1.004 Cosmetic and Reconstructive Surgery
- MP-2.345 Subcutaneous Hormone Pellet Implants

II. PRODUCT VARIATIONS

[TOP](#)

This policy is applicable to all programs and products administered by Capital BlueCross unless otherwise indicated below.

FEP PPO: Electrolysis (hair removal) as part of the preparation for gender reassignment surgery is a covered benefit. Refer to the FEP Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan Brochure 2019 for this information and for a list of covered procedures.

III. DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

[TOP](#)

Gender reassignment therapy is an umbrella term which refers to all medical procedures relating to gender reassignment of both transgender (i.e., internal gender identity is incongruent with genetic sex) and people with disorders of sexual development (DSD) (formerly known as “intersex”). The term "gender reassignment surgery," also known as sexual reassignment surgery, may be used to mean either the reconstruction of male or female genitals, specifically, or the reshaping, by any surgical procedure, of a male body into a body with female appearance, or vice versa.

Gender reassignment surgery is part of a treatment plan for gender dysphoria. The causes of gender dysphoria and the developmental factors associated with them are not well-understood. The individual who is genetically male but whose gender identity is female, and who assumes a female gender presentation and role is known as a transwoman; and the individual who is genetically female but whose gender identity is male, and who assumes a male gender presentation and role is known as a transman.

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

For male to female trans identified individuals selected for surgery, procedures may include genital reconstruction (vaginoplasty, penectomy, orchidectomy, clitoroplasty), breast augmentation and cosmetic surgery (facial reshaping, rhinoplasty, abdominoplasty, laryngeal shaving, vocal cord shortening, hair transplants). For female to male trans identified individuals, surgical procedures may include genital reconstruction (phalloplasty, genitoplasty, hysterectomy, bilateral oophorectomy), mastectomy, chest wall contouring and cosmetic surgery.

Gender reassignment surgery is intended to be a permanent change, establishing congruency between an individual’s gender identity and physical appearance and is not easily reversible. Therefore, a careful and accurate diagnosis is essential for treatment and can be made only as part of a long-term diagnostic process involving a multidisciplinary specialty approach that includes an extensive case history; gynecological, endocrine and urological examination, and a clinical psychiatric/psychological examination. A patient’s self-assessment and desire for sex reassignment cannot be viewed as reliable indicators of gender dysphoria.

IV. RATIONALE

[TOP](#)

Professional Society/Organization

WPATH Guidelines: The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) promotes standards of health care for individuals through the articulation of “Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People” (WPATH, 2012). WPATH recommendations for standards of care are based on scientific evidence and expert consensus and are commonly utilized as guidelines for individuals seeking treatment of gender disorders. In addition to breast surgeries (e.g., augmentation mammoplasty, mastectomy), according to the guidelines the following genital surgeries are considered procedures that may be performed for the treatment of gender dysphoria:

- hysterectomy
- salpingo-oophorectomy (ovariectomy)
- vaginectomy (i.e., removal of the vagina)
- metoidioplasty (i.e., clitoral tissue is released and moved forward to approximate the position of a penis, skin from the labia minora is used to create a penis)
- urethroplasty
- scrotoplasty
- insertion of erection and/or testicular prosthesis (i.e., the labia majora is dissected forming cavities allowing for placement of testicular implants)
- phalloplasty (i.e., skin tissue graft is used to form a penis, the objective for which is standing micturation, improved sexual sensation, function and/or appearance).
- penectomy
- orchiectomy

MEDICAL POLICY

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

- vaginoplasty/colovaginoplasty (the objective for which is improved sexual sensation, function and appearance)
- clitoroplasty
- vulvoplasty
- colovaginoplasty (penile inversion to create a vagina and clitoris, or creation of a vagina from the sigmoid colon)

Endocrine Society Guidelines: 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 medically clear the individual for sex reassignment surgery and collaborate with the surgeon regarding hormone use during and after surgery.

Summary

Sex reassignment surgical procedures, including pre and post-surgery hormone therapy, for diagnosed cases of gender dysphoria 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 for the enduringly successful outcome of surgery.

V. DEFINITIONS

[TOP](#)

N/A

VI. BENEFIT VARIATIONS

[TOP](#)

The existence of this medical policy does not mean that this service is a covered benefit under the member's contract. Benefit determinations should be based in all cases on the applicable contract language. Medical policies do not constitute a description of benefits. A member's individual or group customer benefits govern which services are covered, which are excluded, and which are subject to benefit limits and which require preauthorization. Members and providers should consult the member's benefit information or contact Capital BlueCross for benefit information.

VII. DISCLAIMER

[TOP](#)

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

Capital BlueCross’s medical policies are developed to assist in administering a member’s benefits, do not constitute medical advice and are subject to change. Treating providers are solely responsible for medical advice and treatment of members. Members should discuss any medical policy related to their coverage or condition with their provider and consult their benefit information to determine if the service is covered. If there is a discrepancy between this medical policy and a member’s benefit information, the benefit information will govern. Capital BlueCross considers the information contained in this medical policy to be proprietary and it may only be disseminated as permitted by law.

VIII. CODING INFORMATION

[TOP](#)

Note: This list of codes may not be all-inclusive, and codes are subject to change at any time. The identification of a code on this policy does not denote coverage, as coverage is determined by the terms of member benefit information. In addition, not all covered services are eligible for separate reimbursement.

* For related **Procedures Codes**, please see [POLICY](#) section above. Diagnosis codes listed below.

ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Code*	Description
F64.0	Transsexualism

IX. REFERENCES

[TOP](#)

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POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

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X. POLICY HISTORY

[TOP](#)

MP-1.144	CAC 9/30/15 New policy which addresses if a benefit, criteria that must be met for gender reassignment surgery to be considered medically necessary. Medicare variation added. Coding reviewed/added.
	CAC 7/26/16 Consensus review. Literature review did not reveal any new information that would alter the current policy position. No change to the policy statements. Coding reviewed; codes unarranged.
	Administrative Change 11/7/16: Updated with new ICD-10-CM code for transsexualism, F64.0, and removed revised diagnosis code F61.1 which is

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

not specific to dual role transvestism. Variation formatting updated. Benefit references removed.
Administrative Update 1/1/17: Added new codes 31574, 31591; effective 1/1/17.
CAC 11/29/16 Minor review. Additional breast augmentation criteria added for male to female gender reassignment. Initiation of breast surgery removed from the 2 nd bullet of the trans-gender counseling criteria. Breast augmentation added to the list of procedures requiring a total of 12 months continuous hormonal sex reassignment therapy. Breast augmentation not meeting criteria added to Non-Covered Services section. Cross reference section updated. Benefit reference removed. Coding reviewed; added new codes 31574, 31591; effective 1/1/17.
CAC 7/25/17 Minor review. Per WPATH Standards of Care, added the age of FtM chest surgery may be given individual consideration when criteria is met. Twelve month continuous hormonal sex reassignment therapy requirement added for individuals considering breast surgery unless medically contraindicated. Removed nipple/areola reconstruction from non-covered services. Cross reference section updated. Updated coding.
Admin update 1/17/18: Medicare variations removed from Commercial Policies effective 1/1/18.
3/28/18 Consensus review. No changes to the policy statements. References updated.
Admin update 6/1/18 CPT code 58940 added to policy.
Admin update 8/13/18 Title change and policy language change; Gender Identity Disorder verbiage revised to Gender Dysphoria.
2/18/19 Consensus review. No change to the policy statements. References reviewed. FEP variation added.

[Top](#)

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Appendix

Table 1: DSM 5 Criteria for Gender Dysphoria in Adults and Adolescents:

A. A marked incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months duration, as manifested by two or more of the following:

POLICY TITLE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY FOR GENDER DYSPHORIA
POLICY NUMBER	MP-1.144

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)
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)
3. A strong desire for the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics of the other gender
4. A strong desire to be of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one’s assigned gender)
5. A strong desire to be treated as the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one’s assigned gender)
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)

B. The condition is associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Table 2: Format for referral letters from Qualified Health Professional:

1. Client’s general identifying characteristics; *and*
2. Results of the client’s psychosocial assessment, including any diagnoses; *and*
3. The duration of the mental health professional’s relationship with the client, including the type of evaluation and therapy or counseling to date; *and*
4. An explanation that the WPATH criteria for surgery have been met, and a brief description of the clinical rationale for supporting the patient’s request for surgery; *and*
5. A statement about the fact that informed consent has been obtained from the patient; *and*
6. A statement that the mental health professional is available for coordination of care and welcomes a phone call to establish this.

Note: There is no minimum duration of relationship required with mental health professional. It is the professional’s judgment as to the appropriate length of time before a referral letter can appropriately be written. A common period of time is three months, but there is significant variation in both directions. When two letters are required, the second referral is intended to be an evaluative consultation, not a representation of an ongoing long-term therapeutic relationship, and can be written by a medical practitioner of sufficient experience with gender dysphoria.

Note: Evaluation of candidacy for sex reassignment surgery by a mental health professional is covered under the member’s medical benefit, unless the services of a mental health professional are necessary to evaluate and treat a mental health problem, in which case the mental health professional’s services are covered under the member’s behavioral health benefit.