

Frequently Asked Questions of the Transgender Health Program Regarding MSP Eligibility for Sex Reassignment Surgery

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Q. What are the four criteria MSP uses to determine eligibility for payment of Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) and when were they published?

A. The four criteria, referred to by MSP as B.C. Ministry of Health Service's statement of criteria, were made public October 5, 2004. They refer to the criteria a transsexual client must satisfy for funding of SRS by MSP. The four criteria are:

- The patient must be sufficiently emotionally and psychologically stable such that although a delay in surgery may be disappointing, it would not be a crisis.
- The patient must have had at least two full years of full societal cross-gender immersion. A patient can fulfill this criterion through full-time employment in a public workplace, full-time attendance at an educational or other training institution, significant time spent in voluntary service in a public occupation or any combination of the foregoing.
- After the patient has completed the required two years cross-gender immersion and had the appropriate hormones prescribed, they will be referred to two psychiatrists with recognized and demonstrable expertise in the treatment of gender dysphoria for consultation regarding the appropriateness of surgery.
- Once the psychiatrists have been the consulted and agree that surgery is appropriate, they will contact MSP requesting approval for surgery. After consideration by the Gender Re-assignment Surgical Review Committee, MSP will write the referring physician and patient to advise if surgery has been authorized.

Q. Who decides whether a patient is emotionally and psychologically stable?

A. The team of professionals who assess whether or not you are a suitable candidate for SRS. MSP itself does not assess patients for SRS.

Q. Why do I have to wait two years for funded SRS when individuals willing or able to pay for it themselves can get SRS after one year?

A. MSP is following the policies of other provincial jurisdictions that only fund SRS after a two-year period of RLE. They are aware that this policy was originally established arbitrarily. They may be prepared to re-visit this policy if medical evidence indicates it would be desirable to do so.

Q. Criterion #1 says I must be in “full-time employment in a public workplace, full-time attendance at an educational or other training institution, significant time spent in voluntary service in a public occupation or any combination of the foregoing.” Does this mean that I will not receive funded SRS if for some legitimate reason I cannot full-fill this requirement?

A. No. MSP is prepared to be flexible on this point should the patient be unable to full-fill this requirement. For example, a patient who is retired or has some disability may not be able to satisfy this requirement. Such patients are assessed individually.

Q. After my two years of RLE, who will assess me for SRS?

A. The THP is currently training more assessors. You will be required to meet with any two professionals recognized by MSP.

Q. In criterion #4, reference is made to the Gender Re-assignment Surgical Review Committee. What is the function of this Committee?

A. This Committee is a group of MSP professionals whose purpose is to assess that each patient has completed all requirements for SRS. Its function is to determine if all the documentary evidence has been completed properly.

Q. Can this Committee over-rule the recommendation by my two psychiatrists that I have SRS?

A. No. This Committee does not make medical assessments of patients. Only the medical community makes medical assessments of patients. That is for the two psychiatrists and other medical professionals to make. The Gender Re-assignment Surgical Review Committee will assess whether or not all the “paper work” and medical requirements have been met before authorizing you for funded SRS.

Q. MSP is not following all the Standards of Care (SOC) of The World Professional Association For Transgender Health, Inc. (formerly known as the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association or HBGDA). Is MSP prepared to review this?

A. Yes. MSP is prepared to review and is reviewing their requirements for funded SRS. Any changes made must be evidence based. The THP, with the support of its Advisory Group composed of B.C. trans men and women, is initiating research in this area. As part of this research, the opinions and experiences of trans people will be an integral part.

Q. Can people approved by MSP for SRS still go out of province to receive the surgery?

A. Yes. Until surgery is available in B.C. previous policies for sending people out of B.C. are still in place.
