According to VHA Directive 1341 Providing Health Care for Transgender and Intersex Veterans, “It is VHA policy that staff provide clinically appropriate, comprehensive, Veteran-centered care with respect and dignity to enrolled or otherwise eligible transgender and intersex Veterans, including but not limited to hormonal therapy, mental health care, preoperative evaluation, and medically necessary post-operative and long-term care following gender confirming/affirming surgery. It is VHA policy that Veterans must be addressed based upon their self-identified gender identity; the use of Veteran’s preferred name and pronoun is required. **NOTE:** VA does not provide or fund gender confirming/affirming surgeries because VA regulation excludes them from the medical benefits package.\(^{iii}\)

**Services and Treatment Options Available at Minneapolis VAMC**

**Individual Therapy:** Though not a requirement, psychotherapy is recommended for individuals exploring gender identity and/or pursuing transition. Psychotherapy can provide a setting in which individuals can explore options for gender identity and expression and navigate challenges (e.g., coming out, finding safe spaces, building community). Psychotherapy can also address mental health symptoms that may impede progress toward gender-related goals. To request individual therapy support and you are not already connected to the mental health service line, call Mental Health Intake at 612-467-1921. If you are already seeing a mental health provider and want to actively incorporate gender identity into your care, you are encouraged to come out to your provider.

**Couples Therapy:** Transition can affect partnerships and families too. Couples therapy is available to help navigate changes related to transition. If you already have a mental health treatment coordinator, ask them to refer you to couples therapy. If you do not have a mental health treatment coordinator you will first need to get connected with mental health services by calling Mental Health Intake at 612-467-1921 and after an initial intake appointment ask for a referral for couples services.

**Transgender Support Group:** A support group for transgender/non-binary veterans meets once a month at the main hospital facility. If you want more information about the group, please talk with your outpatient mental health provider. If you are interested in attending this group, request that your mental health provider contact staff psychologist, Rebecca Stinson, PhD, LP, who facilitates the group.

**Carry Letters:** Veterans can request a ‘carry letter’ from their medical provider to facilitate day-to-day interactions where a person might benefit from confirmation of their gender identity and advocacy for equal treatment.

**Letters in Support of Gender-Affirming Surgery:** Although VA does not provide or pay for surgeries with the specific goal of gender transition, VA providers can write letters of support to be used towards surgery outside VA. Letters can be written after undergoing a readiness evaluation with a qualified mental health provider. Please consult with your surgeon to ensure the appropriate type of provider and
documentation criteria are met. If you are already receiving mental health services, you can ask your provider to write you a letter in support of surgery.

**Voice Coaching:** Voice and communication training is available through our speech pathology department. The focus of training includes work on verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication. To set up an initial session please request a speech pathology consult from your primary care provider within the VA. Once the consult is placed our medical support staff will contact you to set up an appointment.

**Prosthetics:** If you have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria your primary care or mental health provider can submit a request for medically necessary prosthetics to alleviate symptoms of gender dysphoria. Current approved items are breast forms, wigs, chest binders, STPs, packers and packing harnesses/underwear, gaffs, and vaginal dilators. When entering a prosthetic consult, your provider should 1) verify the diagnosis of gender dysphoria, 2) clearly state the medical necessity of the requested prosthetic item, as well as 3) provide details of the item being requested so the correct item can be dispensed.

**Hormone Therapy:** Hormone therapy can be provided/managed through your primary care physician if such treatment is judged to be safe and appropriate for your care.

Before hormone therapy can begin a diagnostic and mental health readiness evaluation must be completed by a licensed mental health provider. Mental health providers may differ in their levels of comfort and expertise with these evaluations. If you are already working with a mental health provider who feels comfortable completing a diagnostic assessment for gender dysphoria as well as a mental health readiness evaluation for cross-sex hormones, have them provide these services and document the results in your medical record. If your mental health provider does not feel qualified to do these evaluations, request that they put in a consult. They can find the consult request under Mental Health Consults for Outpatients (Mental Health Evaluation for Medical Intervention).

If your medical provider needs support or assistance in initiating or monitoring hormone therapy, you can recommend they submit an e-consult with specific questions and an expert team will provide guidance/recommendations. They can find the consult request on the main consult request page in CPRS (Transgender National E-Consult).

**Changing your Name/Gender Marker in your Medical Chart:** Veterans should fill out form 10-5345a (Individuals’ Request for a Copy of Their Own Health Information) as well as submit the necessary documentation for name and/or gender marker change. Please see the Minneapolis VA LGBT Program website (http://www.minneapolis.va.gov/services/LGBT.asp) for forms and full details regarding how to update name and/or gender marker in VA patient record system.

**Corrective Procedures and Post-Operative Care:** Veterans can access corrective medical procedures and surgeries if complications arise from gender-affirming surgeries obtained through community providers. Additionally, veterans are eligible for post-operative care that would support veterans in their recovery from gender-affirming surgeries obtained through community providers.
Education Resources: The Health and Wellness Learning Center (1S-134) near the outpatient entrance has a variety of books available for veterans related to LGBT identities. Reading material ranges from personal memoirs, histories of LGBT communities, resource guides, and general education related to LGBT identities. For VA providers, the medical library has a variety of educational resources available related to transgender identities and culturally competent and inclusive care services.

Other VA Resources
- If your provider(s) has questions about transgender health care within VA, encourage them to submit an e-consult with specific questions and an expert team will provide guidance/recommendations. They can find the consult request under “other consults” as part of the outpatient consult menu (Transgender E-Consult).
- If your provider(s) need more specific information regarding general transgender health care and/or accessing services within the Minneapolis VA, encourage them to visit the Minneapolis VA Transgender Health Care Sharepoint site at https://vaww.visn23.portal.va.gov/min/SiteDirectory/TransgenderHC/SitePages/Home.aspx
- Additional information is available for providers on the National Transgender Education Sharepoint site at https://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/pcsclipro/trer/default.aspx
- For more information regarding local and/or national resources, please visit the Minneapolis VA LGBT Program website at http://www.minneapolis.va.gov/services/LGBT.asp
- If you encounter any issues with your care, or need additional help navigating the system, please contact our LGBT Veteran Care Coordinators, Nicole Fisher or Paul Portenlanger, through My HealtheVet (find the LGBT indicator on the drop-down option menu).
- If you are in crisis,
  o call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 for veterans.
  o call the Trans Crisis Line (a non-VA crisis line staffed 24/7 by transgender people) at 1-877-565-8860.

Other Community Resources
Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition – http://mntranshealth.org/
Transgender Oral History Project - https://www.lib.umn.edu/tretter/transgender-oral-history-project
OutFront Minnesota - https://www.outfront.org/
Gender Justice - http://www.genderjustice.us/
Couples in Transition - https://couplesintransition.org/
Quatrefoil Library - https://www.qlibrary.org/
One Voice MN - http://onevoicemn.org/
City of Lakes Crossgender Community – http://clccll.tripod.com
Transcend Legal - https://transcendlegal.org/
National Center for Transgender Equality - https://transequality.org/
Transgender Law Center - https://transgenderlawcenter.org/

1. VHA Directive 1341 “Providing Health Care for Transgender and Intersex Veterans”, May 23, 2018