

# VA PUGET SOUND SERVICES

## Lesbian | Gay | Bisexual | Transgender Gender-Diverse | Queer + Veterans

### LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator: Bridget Reposa, BSN, RN (She/Her/Hers)

Serves as the point of contact, source of information, advocate, and staff educator for LGBTQ+ Veteran-related health care issues for the VA Puget Sound Health Care System.

Phone: 206-277-3233

Email: [bridget.reposa@va.gov](mailto:bridget.reposa@va.gov)

My HealtheVet: LGBTQ\_PUG\_Bridget

Website: [www.va.gov/puget-sound-health-care/health-services/lgbtq-veteran-care/](http://www.va.gov/puget-sound-health-care/health-services/lgbtq-veteran-care/)



**VA**

**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health  
Administration  
VA Puget Sound  
Health Care System

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Veteran Health Education Committee  
**VHEC** APPROVED  
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# UPDATING YOUR HEALTH RECORD:

## GENDER, CHOSEN NAME, AND PRONOUNS IN YOUR HEALTH RECORD

- You can update your own gender identity and name on va.gov, under profile, which will transfer into your health record.
- Please speak to your provider about your gender identity, chosen name and pronouns.
- If you want a pop-up window listing the name you go by, your pronouns and gender to open when staff access your chart, please contact Bridget Reposa.

## LEGAL NAME CHANGE

- After you legally change your name through the court system and have a new government issued photo ID with your date of birth, you will fill out the patient amendment request form. You will bring that form, the court order, and your new ID to **the Release of Information (ROI) office**. The ROI office should have copies of these forms for you to fill out there.
- After the documents are sent to the Privacy Office, they will mail you a letter saying they received the legal documents. It will take about 30 days from the date on the mailed letter for the health record system to officially update your legal name.
- There are additional steps to change birth sex requiring you to either update your birth sex on your birth certificate or get a letter from your primary care or gender affirming care provider. Contact information for the Privacy Office: 206-277-5156 or 206-277-6039, Email: [pugprivacyofficers@va.gov](mailto:pugprivacyofficers@va.gov)
- Once your legal name is updated in the health record system, go to the eligibility office to get a new VA ID card with your new legal name and/or birth sex.

# MENTAL HEALTH CARE:

## PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS FOR TRANSGENDER/ GENDER DIVERSE VETERANS - VIRTUAL

- Meets virtually on the 3rd Monday at 9:00 a.m. OR 1st Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. of each month.
- Participants must have completed some initial steps in addressing their transgender identity. *This is not a drop-in support group.*
- Open to all Veterans enrolled at VA Puget Sound with a mental health provider serving as point of contact. This can be the mental health staff associated with primary care clinics and does not have to be through specialty mental health services. Must be referred by a mental health provider.
- Led by Dr. MJ Mariano, Ph. D, psychologist (She/Her/Hers) & Desta Gebregiorgis (She/They). Contact: 206-277-3027



## **SUPPORT GROUP FOR LGBTQ+ VETERANS - VIRTUAL**

- Meets virtually on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 3:00 p.m.
- Led by Kyle Czeh, LICSW (He/Him/His) and Kevin Skiena, MSW (He/Him/His).  
Contact: 206-277-6020

## **LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY-BUILDING SKILLS AND SUPPORT GROUP - VIRTUAL**

- Meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 3:00 pm
- Run by Bridget Reposa, RN (She/Her/Hers) and Dr. Alvaro Garcia (He/Him/His)
- Intakes done by Kyle Czeh, LICSW (He/Him/His). Contact: 206-277-6020

## **INDIVIDUAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND THERAPY**

- If you have never seen a mental health provider at the VA, please call our Mental Health Patient Access Line at 206-277-4709. If you were enrolled in VA Mental Health Care any time in the last 3 years, call the Mental Health Front Desk (206-764-2007) and schedule a next appointment.
- Ask any provider to place consult to Primary Care Mental Health, if you don't already have a VA mental health provider.

## **MENTAL HEALTH LETTERS FOR GENDER AFFIRMING SURGERY**

- Ask your mental health provider either through the VA or community care to write the first letter for you. If you need a second mental health letter, please let your mental health provider and Bridget Reposa know to be connected with another VA mental health provider.
- If you do not have a mental health provider at the VA or in the community and you're connected with VA Puget Sound Primary Care, please call the primary care mental health integration team at 253-589-4241 to be connected with a mental health provider.
- If you do not have a mental health provider and your primary care provider is through the community, please reach out to Bridget Reposa to be connected to a mental health provider.

## **VA VIDEO CONNECT (VVC) [FOR VIRTUAL APPOINTMENTS]**

- VA Video Connect allows Veterans and their caregivers to meet virtually with VA health care providers quickly and easily through live video on any computer, tablet, or mobile device with an internet connection.
- For more information, visit <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>



## FAMILY PLANNING/FERTILITY:

Talk to your primary care provider if you have questions about fertility.

### INFERTILITY SERVICES FOR BIRTH SEX FEMALE VETERANS

- Laboratory blood testing (e.g., follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), thyroid stimulating hormone)
- Genetic counseling and testing
- Pelvic and/or transvaginal ultrasound
- Hysterosalpingogram (x-ray of uterus and fallopian tubes)
- Saline infused sonohysterogram (ultrasound)
- Surgical correction of structural pathology consistent with standard of care including operative laparoscopy and operative hysteroscopy
- Reversal of tubal ligation
- Hormonal therapies (e.g., controlled ovarian hyperstimulation)
- Oral medication for ovulation induction (e.g., clomiphene)
- Injectable gonadotropin medications for ovulation induction (e.g., human menopausal gonadotropins)
- Additional hormonal therapies as approved by VA Pharmacy Benefits Management
- Intrauterine insemination (IUI)
- Oocyte cryopreservation (egg freezing) for medically-indicated conditions (e.g., cancer, gender affirming hormone therapy)

### INFERTILITY SERVICES FOR BIRTH SEX MALE VETERANS

- Laboratory blood testing (e.g., serum testosterone, FSH, luteinizing hormone, estradiol, etc.)
- Genetic counseling and testing
- Transrectal and/or scrotal ultrasonography
- Semen analysis
- Evaluation and treatment of erectile dysfunction
- Surgical correction of structural pathology (e.g., varicocele, Peyronie's repair)
- Vasectomy reversal
- Hormonal therapies
- Sperm retrieval techniques
- Post-ejaculatory urinalysis
- Sperm cryopreservation for medically-indicated conditions (e.g., cancer, gender affirming hormone therapy)



## INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION:

### PREP (PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS)/ PREP CLINIC

- PrEP is a medication used to decrease the risk of getting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).
- Ask your provider for a prescription or a consult to the Infectious Disease pharmacist.
- The PrEP Clinic: appointments can be done virtually or in-person.

### HIV/STI (SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS) TESTING

- Ask your Primary Care Provider (PCP) to order STI testing.
- Ask for a prescription for condoms.
- If you're living with HIV and you'd like your HIV care through the VA contact your PCP.

## GENERAL CARE:

### PRIMARY CARE

- For new patients needing a primary care provider, please call 206-762-1010 ext. 2.

### PHARMACY

- Call 1-800-329-8387 (press 1).

### INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (IPVAP)

- If you need support with safety planning, VA or community resources related to IPV, or want to attend a group for Veterans who have experienced or used IPV, you can talk to any of your providers or contact the IPV Assistance Program directly at 206- 716 – 5784.

### MY HEALTHeVet (MHV)

- Premium MHV members can send secure messages to their providers, renew VA prescriptions, and view their VA appointments.
- <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthevet/user-registration>



## GENDER AFFIRMING CARE:

### HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT)/ GENDER AFFIRMING HORMONE THERAPY (GAHT)

- Feminizing and masculinizing hormone treatment to align secondary sex characteristics with gender identity.
- Any primary care or endocrine provider can prescribe gender affirming hormone therapy for Veterans with gender dysphoria/ incongruence. Please ask your provider about starting GAHT.
- Gender dysphoria can be diagnosed by primary care, mental health, or endocrinology.
- Although it may be helpful for patients to work with mental health providers as a support, this is NOT required prior to starting GAHT.
- Talk to your provider about fertility preservation before starting hormone therapy.

### GENDER DIVERSITY CLINIC (GDC)

- Clinic is for gender affirming care - GAHT/HRT and discussing other needed care.
- Every Wednesday morning from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the West Clinic embedded in Endocrinology at the Seattle Division. You will need a consult from your primary care provider to get seen at the GDC.

### MEDICALLY NECESSARY POST-OPERATIVE AND LONG-TERM CARE FOLLOWING GENDER AFFIRMING SURGERY

- If you are experiencing any complications after a gender affirming surgery, you can be seen at any of the following clinics, but not limited to, gynecology, urology, or pelvic floor physical therapy. Please let your provider know of any complications.
- Care typically starts 6 weeks after surgery.

### PELVIC FLOOR PHYSICAL THERAPY- SEATTLE AND AMERICAN LAKE

- For pre/post op gender affirming surgery care, dilator training, urinary, bowel, and pelvic pain concerns. Devices for therapies can be ordered as needed.
- Telephone, virtual (VA Video Connect), and in-person appointments are available. Request a consult from any provider.



## PROSTHETIC DEVICES

- VA can provide wigs (for significant hair loss), packers, stand to pee devices, gaffs, chest binders, surgical compression devices (after surgery), breast forms, and dilators.
- Request vendor information and inform any provider of the style, color, and size you would like prior to asking for placement of the consult.
- We have a VA Indiana orthotic provider to help virtually consult with gender affirming items.

## ELECTROLYSIS/LASER HAIR REMOVAL

- The VA provides permanent hair removal coverage pre-operatively for Veterans seeking gender affirming surgeries. You will need to provide pre-operative hair removal instructions from your surgeon for the referral to be placed.
- The VA may be able to provide permanent hair removal for Veterans with dysphoria around current hair distribution. Please speak with your provider about this.
- We currently don't have an electrolysis provider that will accept VA/TriWest payment. We are working on finding someone and/or getting an electrolysis machine at the VA.

## SURGICAL ORCHIECTOMY FOR HORMONE SUPPRESSION (TESTICAL REMOVAL SURGERY)

- Must be on hormones for at least 1 year before a consult to Urology Clinic.
- Name change in your health record if you have a gender specific name to one that matches your current gender identity prior to scheduling surgery.
- Decisions about the appropriate use of orchiectomy will be made on a case-by-case basis as determined by your treatment team.

## GENDER AFFIRMING VOICE TREATMENT- VIRTUAL

- Ask any provider to enter a consult to Speech-Language Pathology Clinic.

## GENDER AFFIRMING SURGERY

- The discussion of gender affirming surgery was announced summer 2021. Congress needs to add gender affirming surgery to the Veterans Affairs Medical Benefits Package.
- WA Medicaid patients may be eligible to have gender affirming surgery at outside facilities. Please contact Medicaid for more information if you qualify.
- Ask your primary care or gender affirming care provider for the medical letter needed.



## BENEFITS:

### WHAT IF I WAS DISCHARGED DURING OR BEFORE DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL?

- Please visit Veterans Benefits Counselors at Jackson Federal Building at 915 2nd Ave. Seattle, WA 98174, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. to get help upgrading your discharge record.
- Phone number to call for help: 1-800-827-1000
- [www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/](http://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/)

### NAME CHANGE AND BENEFITS LETTERS

- Bring your new government ID and name change court order to the Benefits Counselors, on the first floor of the Seattle Jackson Federal Building, to update your benefits letters.

### APPOINTMENTS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH BENEFITS COUNSELORS

- Visitors seeking assistance from the Benefits Counselors at the Seattle Regional Office are encouraged to schedule a virtual or in-person appointment on the Visitor Engagement Reporting Application (VERA). VERA is a self-service portal which allows visitors to schedule, reschedule, and cancel appointments.
- Please visit <https://vets.force.com/VAVERA/s/> to schedule an appointment. You will receive an email confirmation of your appointment. (Source: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/seattle/>)
- All branches of the military consider you to have a strong case for a discharge upgrade if you can show your discharge was connected to any of these categories: mental health conditions, sexual assault/military sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury, sexual orientation.

### APPLY FOR VA HEALTH CARE

<https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction> (VA Form 10-10EZ)

**VA health care covers care for your physical and mental health.**

- You may be eligible to enroll in VA health care if all of these statements are true:
- You served in the active military, naval, or air service (including being called up from the National Guard or Reserve by a federal order), **and**
- You didn't receive a dishonorable discharge, **and**
- You meet at least one of the service requirements for enrollment
- You must meet at least one of these service requirements:
- You served at least 24 months in a row without a break (called continuous), or for your full active-duty period, **or**
- You were discharged for a service-connected disability, **or**
- You were discharged for a hardship or "early out," **or**
- You served before September 7, 1980





## VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS

**Veteran Service Officers (VSO)** will help you write and submit your service-connected benefits claim to the VA. Their services are free. They will help you gather the information that supports your claim. Once the claim is filed, they will help you track the claim through the system. They can also help you file appeals for denied claims. Organizations that help with benefits claims: Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, Amvets. (Source: <https://nvf.org/veteran-service-officers/>)

- **VSO for WA State Dept. of VA:** Robin Lang, LGBTQ+ Veterans Outreach Coordinator, 360-280-9311 [robin.lang@dva.wa.gov](mailto:robin.lang@dva.wa.gov), <https://www.dva.wa.gov/lgbtq-veterans> or Rafael Lozano [rafaell@dva.wa.gov](mailto:rafaell@dva.wa.gov)
- **American Legion, American Lake Division:** 253-583-1300. Monday-Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 12 p.m., 1-3:30 p.m. walk-in
- **DAV, Jackson Federal Building Room 1040:** 206-341-8267, [Dav.vbasea@va.gov](mailto:Dav.vbasea@va.gov), 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. Monday-Wednesday and Fridays.
- **VFW, Jackson Federal Building Room 1044:** 206-341-8284, Monday-Friday 7 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- **King County Veterans Program (Seattle & Tukwila):** 206-263-8387 refers to Northwest Justice Project
- **Pierce County Veterans Program (Tacoma):** 253-798-7449, [veterans@piercecountywa.gov](mailto:veterans@piercecountywa.gov)

## OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

**National VA's LGBTQ+ Website:** <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/>

- Gay City- Seattle's LGBTQ+ Center
- Washington State LGBTQ+ Commission- LGBTQ+ Resources & Advocacy for WA State
- QLaw Foundation- Free Legal Clinic for LGBTQ+ People
- GenPride- Programs for 65+ Adults in King County

## Veterans Crisis Line

Provides a free, confidential way 24/7 for anyone in crisis to connect with caring, qualified responder.

**Dial 988 then Press 1**  
**Text 838255**

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

**Chat online**  
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/chat>



# PRIDE in Your Health

Celebrating, Honoring, Serving,  
the Veteran You Are.



**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health  
Administration  
VA Puget Sound  
Health Care System

For more information contact:  
Bridget Reposa, RN  
LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator  
206-277-3233

**Pride Counts at VA**

Visit our website: [www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT](http://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT)  
Questions? Email us at: [VHALGBTQ+Health@va.gov](mailto:VHALGBTQ+Health@va.gov)

