

## Mental Health Provider Involvement for our Patients

We follow the guidelines of all the major medical societies and transgender health advocacy organizations. We strongly encourage a mental health provider and a primary care provider for all our patients. We require both types of care in order to prescribe medical treatment for patients under 18 years of age. Many insurance companies require a “letter of readiness” from a mental health provider for insurance to cover transition related medical care. To determine what is required by your specific insurance policy, call the patient line which is typically located on the back of your insurance card. In many cases, we can assist with finding this information. Our program has less rigid requirements for mental health assessments than many U.S. pediatric programs for gender non-conforming and transgender youth.

Care for all patients should include a multi-disciplinary assessment of the whole child or young adult. Expertise in the medical aspects of transition, needs to be balanced with input from those who have known the family a long time (often the primary care provider who is making the initial referral) and a mental health provider who can provide support before, during and after medical transition if stresses arise.

- We do not require a minimum number of visits to a mental health provider.
- We do not require a mental health provider who is associated with our program.
- We would like to receive a letter from a mental health provider concerning each patient. For those providers who work for government funded programs and are not allowed to provide letters of readiness, then we can have a phone conversation with the mental health providers to review and coordinate care.
- We can suggest trans-affirming providers in the area. “Transgender people deserve to receive mental health services from providers who are culturally competent. Trans-affirmative care assumes that the clients understand their own experience and identity.” – *UCSF Center of Excellence for Transgender Health*

An ideal letter from a mental health provider would include:

- How long the provider has known the patient
- Discussion of consistence, persistence, or insistence of gender identity. Sometimes therapists outline how the patient meets the diagnostic criteria for gender dysphoria.
- That there are no untreated mental health concerns which may be negatively impacted by hormonal therapies (blocking puberty or cross-sex hormones)
- A discussion of community support available for the patient: family, school or work, friends, partner, etc.
- That the therapist is available to provide ongoing support if needed.