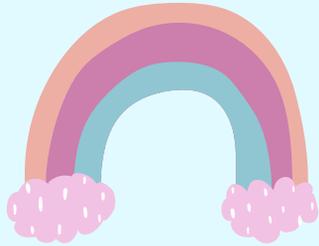




# The Massachusetts Transgender Health Coalition's

## Guiding Principles for Gender-Affirming Care in the time of COVID-19 Information for Trans, NonBinary, and Gender-Diverse Patients



**HANG IN THERE.** We understand the importance of your gender-affirming care. There are many long-awaited gender-affirming appointments or procedures, which are now being canceled or postponed. We also understand that hospitals are struggling to serve a large number of people with COVID-19 cases that are immediately life-threatening and that moving forward with in-person gender-affirming services increases your risk of possible exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Please know that we are doing what we can to ensure providers and insurers understand the importance of gender-affirming care and that these procedures are seen as priorities when it comes time to reschedule. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to: [MTPC](#) or [GLADAnswers.org](#).



**STAY CONNECTED.** We know it can be devastating to have your appointment or procedure canceled or postponed. Please make sure you have someone you can talk to or resources you can access online or by telephone. [Here are a few.](#)



**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.** As transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people and their advocates, we know that navigating the health care system can be a challenging and, often, painful experience. Discrimination against transgender people in the health care system is unlawful. If you have concerns about any mistreatment that you experience during this public health emergency, please reach out to: [MTPC](#) or [GLADAnswers.org](#).



**BE AWARE.** Stay indoors as much as possible. Keep a safe distance. Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Cover your mouth and nose with a face covering in the presence of others or if you are sick. Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean and disinfect surfaces daily. If you feel ill, call your doctor. If you are immunocompromised or have another underlying health condition, follow your doctor's guidance. You can find CDC guidelines here: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).





# The Massachusetts Transgender Health Coalition's

## Guiding Principles for Gender-Affirming Care in the time of COVID-19 5 Tips for Providers

**BE MINDFUL.** When notifying patients of a change in their appointment, please avoid terms like “elective,” “cosmetic,” “non-essential,” and “non-urgent.” This language undermines the importance of this medically necessary, gender-affirming care, which, for many transgender people, is life-saving. Instead, we encourage providers to communicate the need to reschedule these procedures as being due to limited hospital capacity and the need to prioritize COVID-19 cases that are immediately life-threatening.

**BE SUPPORTIVE.** Canceling/postponing appointments and procedures can have a profound, negative impact on a patient’s well being. Due to existing disparities, transgender people experience significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation than their cisgender peers, and research shows that access to gender-affirming care reduces these mental health risks. Further delays in accessing gender-affirming treatment can worsen a patient’s mental health. It is critical providers offer resources to their patients or connect them to appropriate counseling and mental health services when communicating necessary cancellations or postponement of this medically necessary care. These steps can save lives.

**BE PROACTIVE.** Immediately alert insurers of changes in procedures and prioritize the rescheduling of these appointments and procedures when it is safe to do so.

**BE CLEAR.** When rescheduling appointments and procedures, make sure to inform patients that you may need to reschedule again. Avoid using vague language to ensure the patient is aware of the next steps and has the information they need to make alternative arrangements if necessary.

**REAFFIRM YOUR COMMITMENT TO NON-DISCRIMINATION.** Transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people have historically faced, and continue to suffer, rampant discrimination in health care. Massachusetts has made a commitment through its laws and policies to prohibit such discrimination. Providers should treat transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people who contract COVID-19 with dignity and respect.





# The Massachusetts Transgender Health Coalition's

## Guiding Principles for Gender-Affirming Care in the time of COVID-19 3 Tips for Insurers



**BE ACCOMMODATING.** Given the delay of many gender-affirming appointments and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, insurers should extend any prior authorization deadlines that expire during the emergency period or soon after that. These extensions will prevent further delays of medically necessary care caused by resubmissions of required documentation. Extension of prior authorization deadlines is consistent with Section 1135 waiver authority granted to state Medicaid programs by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.



**BE INFORMATIVE.** To help address the uncertainty that many people face regarding their gender-affirming care, proactively send information to providers and patients indicating that prior authorizations will be extended, as stated above.



**REAFFIRM YOUR COMMITMENT TO NON-DISCRIMINATION.** Transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people have historically faced, and continue to suffer, rampant discrimination in health care. Massachusetts has made a commitment through its laws and policies to prohibit such discrimination. It is crucial, especially during public health emergencies, that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and that all people have access to the treatment they need to recover from COVID-19. The Massachusetts Transgender Health Coalition urges insurers to proactively communicate this commitment to providers and patients.

