

# Trans Care BC Progress Update



**TRANS CARE BC**  
Provincial Health  
Services Authority

## Message from the director

Lorraine Grieves

As the result of years of effort led by a range of community members and supporters, we now have Trans Care BC working to coordinate and enhance transgender health services across the province. I had the privilege of joining the Trans Care BC team as director in October 2015. In the first four months of my role, the focus was to set up internal infrastructure and to implement aftercare funding for surgeries in Montreal.

A year later we now have a fully staffed, experienced and committed team working on your behalf. We have successfully merged Vancouver Coastal Health's provincial Transgender Health Information program (THiP) and CALL Out! into our Trans Care BC team. Based on the recommendations from the Trans Health Steering Committee, in our first year we have focused on improvements to primary and surgical care access. We have also established a care coordination team to support clients in finding affirming health care, assessments and coordination for surgery.

We've developed a clearer pathway for surgical assessments and have submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Health on how we can further improve access to upper and lower surgeries in BC. Our team has two publicly funded nurses offering low barrier surgical readiness assessments in-person and

through telehealth (video sessions) for more remote communities.

To build capacity among primary care health providers, we have held targeted education sessions across the province. We have also provided training to mental health practitioners to enhance their skills in gender-affirming counselling and support. Regular mentorship calls for physicians, nurse practitioners and counsellors are now being held regularly.

Our work with regional health authorities is ongoing. With Island Health, we piloted a community action planning process with a regional community advisory committee this fall. As we continue to host action planning sessions and gather feedback, we've been able to connect with trans community members, service providers, loved ones and parents of gender-creative children, and trans kids and youth. We are hearing strong support of our program goals, and seeing great energy and partnership opportunities to help move this work forward. In the new year, we plan to work with other regional community groups and health regions on an action planning process.

Plans for 2017 include: creating a strategy to increase access to care for gender-creative children, and trans children and youth; establishing a provincial committee for primary

**SINGLE ASSESSMENT**

- STEP 1** Your doctor or nurse practitioner (primary care provider) refers you for a surgical readiness assessment or completes the assessment with you, if they are a qualified assessor.
- STEP 2** Your primary care provider sends your completed assessment and relevant medical information to a BC surgeon.
- STEP 3** The surgeon's office will contact you (or your provider) to book a consult appointment. Depending on the type of surgery, and the surgeon, the wait time will vary for the consultation and surgery.

**DOUBLE ASSESSMENT**

- STEP 1** Your doctor or nurse practitioner (primary care provider) refers you for a surgical readiness assessment or completes the assessment with you, if they are a qualified assessor.
- STEP 2** Your primary care provider supports you to get a second assessment. They can work with another qualified assessor or contact Trans Care BC to coordinate the appointment for you.
- STEP 3** Your primary care provider sends both completed assessments to the surgeon's office. Gender reconstruction procedures are done in Quebec or, in selected cases, out-of-country. Contact the Trans Care BC care coordination team for more details.
- STEP 4** The surgeon's office will contact you (or your provider) to book a consult appointment. Depending on the type of surgery, and the surgeon, the wait time will vary for the consultation and surgery.

**CONTACT US**  
If you or your health care provider have any questions, call us toll-free  
**1-866-999-1514**  
or use our online contact form at  
[www.phsa.ca/transcare](http://www.phsa.ca/transcare)

**Our goal is to help you reach your gender-affirming goals**

[Read more about our new surgical readiness assessment process.](#)

care; establishing regional and provincial peer and family networks; partnering with the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health conference in fall 2017; improving surgery access; creating an online education program and tools; and more.

On behalf of our team, I thank you for your support and partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of trans people in BC. We hope for continued collaborative partnership in 2017. All the best to you and your loved ones.

Lorraine Grieves, MA, RCC  
Provincial Program Director  
Trans Care BC

# What is Trans Care BC?

Trans Care BC is a new provincial program that aims to enhance the coordination of trans health services and supports across the province, bringing gender-affirming care closer to home wherever possible.

Trans Care BC was established as a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) in fall 2015, following community engagement and input from transgender communities, clinical experts and stakeholders.

BC is the first province in Canada to create a comprehensive provincial system to support transgender health.

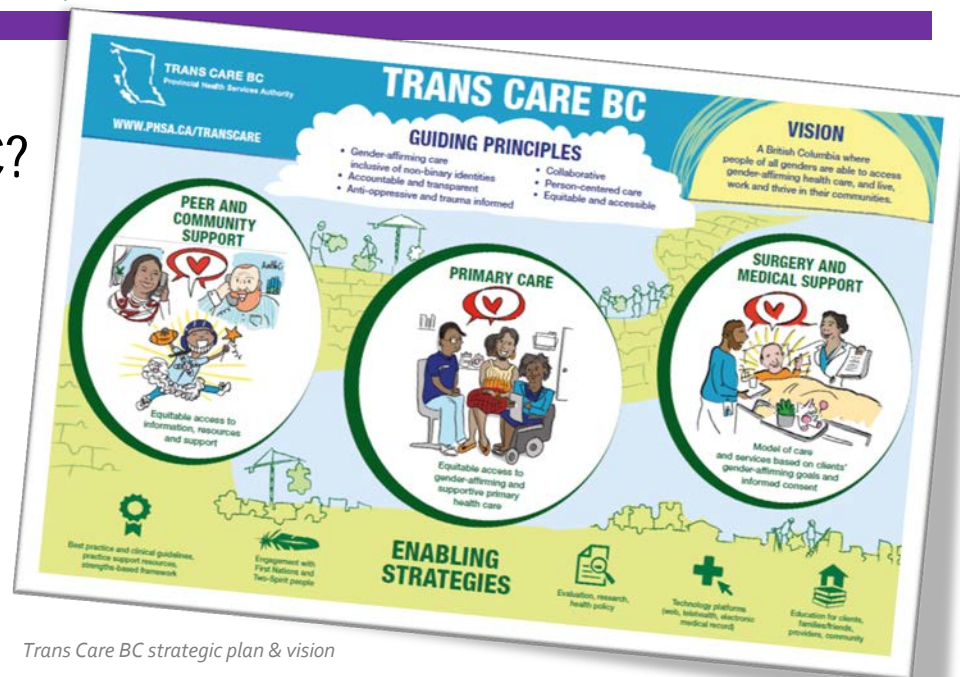
## CONTACT INFORMATION

Have questions?

Email: [transcarebc@phsa.ca](mailto:transcarebc@phsa.ca)

Toll-free: 1-866-999-1514

Website: [www.phsa.ca/transcare](http://www.phsa.ca/transcare)



*Trans Care BC strategic plan & vision*

Trans Care BC is working closely with partners and stakeholders including transgender communities, individuals, non-profits, regional health authorities and the First Nations Health Authority to develop a comprehensive provincial network of services.

We are working to offer expanded and sustainable health services by:

- Developing gender-affirming, client-centered models of care

- Ensuring equitable access to gender-affirming and supportive health care for children and youth
- Supporting network development and other efforts to ensure efficient access to information, resources and peer support for trans/gender diverse individuals, their families, friends and health service providers

## Service delivery model

Trans Care BC has begun to develop a standard framework for the delivery of gender-affirming and supportive health care for children, families, youth, adults and older adults. The need for this work has been informed by recommendations from the 2014/15 Trans Health Steering Committee. The committee identified goals of developing gender-affirming, client-centered models of service that would lead to equitable access to gender-affirming and supportive health care as close to home as possible.

Our first step was to establish a primary care working group focused on developing a standard care model for adults, older adults and older youth. The working group included health care providers with primary care

expertise and a strong knowledge and experience in trans care, as well as community members. This group started in early summer 2016 and continued to meet throughout the fall and early winter.

Key work of this group includes:

- Developing a tiered model of care for the delivery of health services for trans adults, older adults and older youth.
- Defining competencies for primary care providers related to the tiers of care, which will inform the development of an education framework to expand access to primary care across the province.
- Developing a toolkit to support primary care providers taking on this work.



[Check out our infographic on accessing gender-affirming surgery in BC.](#)

*Service delivery model continued...*

- Establishing a mentorship call to support primary care providers.
- Streamlining the surgical readiness assessment process to improve access for clients across the province.

Trans Care BC is now working on how to implement this tiered model of care with health care providers across the province, which will include education, communication and change management strategies.

A priority piece of work that will be initiated in the new year will be to partner with youth, parents and providers to define the approach for developing a model of care for trans youth, children and their families. This is an exciting and complex piece of work, but one that has been identified as a key need within the system of care.



[Watch the Trans Care BC video.](#)

## Meet the team!

Trans Care BC's care coordination team helps connect people in BC to gender-affirming health and wellness supports. The small team includes health navigators, nurses, peers and admin support staff. The team has access to a medical director (physician) for consultation as needed.

The care coordination team works alongside service providers and community contacts from across the province to help people find care and support as close to home as possible.

**Please note that the care coordination team is not a crisis service.** If you are in crisis, please call 9-1-1 or visit your nearest emergency room. You can also contact the BC Crisis Line toll-free at 1-800-784-2433

### We support:

- Youth, adults, children and families
- Caregivers, partners, teachers, friends
- Health care providers, social workers, counsellors and other service providers

### We can help:

- Find health and wellness resources
- Navigate the health care system, including helping to identify if there are services in your area
- Get medical support for pre- and post-surgical care happening outside of BC

### We work with service providers to:

- Promote best practices in gender-affirming, client-centred care
- Offer clinical consultation and advice
- Provide education to enhance trans health services across BC

### Where is the team located?

The care coordination team is based in Vancouver, but offers support to clients across the province via phone, email, and telehealth (video sessions in some locations). We also offer information online at <http://transhealth.phsa.ca> on a number of topics related to trans health and wellness.

### How can I contact the team?

The care coordination team is available by phone Monday to Friday. The best way to contact us is by completing an online contact form:

[Online contact form](#)

**Call us toll-free:** 1-866-999-1514

**Email:** [transcareteam@phsa.ca](mailto:transcareteam@phsa.ca)

Visit our website to learn more: [www.phsa.ca/transcare](http://www.phsa.ca/transcare)



The care coordination team (front, left to right: Sandy Gunderson, Kim McLean; back, left to right: Zain Meghji, Marria Townsend, Lau Mehes, Lucas Wilson and Stacy Wood.

#### FAST FACTS

# 67+

Over 67 surgical readiness assessments completed by Trans Care BC nurses since May 2016

# 500+

Assisted over 500 clients and service providers with information, navigation, support and referrals in 2016.

## Peer & community support

Gathering input from transgender, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse communities and families is critical to the development of a provincial network of services. We are currently meeting with communities across BC to validate current services, identify needs, and explore opportunities to work together to provide care and support closer to home.

Highlights to date include:

- In partnership with Island Health, a series of knowledge exchange and community action planning sessions have begun in four communities to hear from local community members and service providers. The results of these sessions will inform the roll out of Trans Care BC program activities in partnership with Island Health and key stakeholders.

- In the East/West Kootenays, the team hosted the first community action and information session with trans and gender-diverse community of all ages in partnership with Trans Connect.
- In Northern Health, we will be partnering with local community members to develop opportunities in Prince George for community action planning and knowledge exchange in 2017.

Trans Care BC is committed to hearing from peer and community support service providers and members of the community across the health regions over the next year. Our goal is to support the development of local, regional, and provincial peer and community support groups and networks.



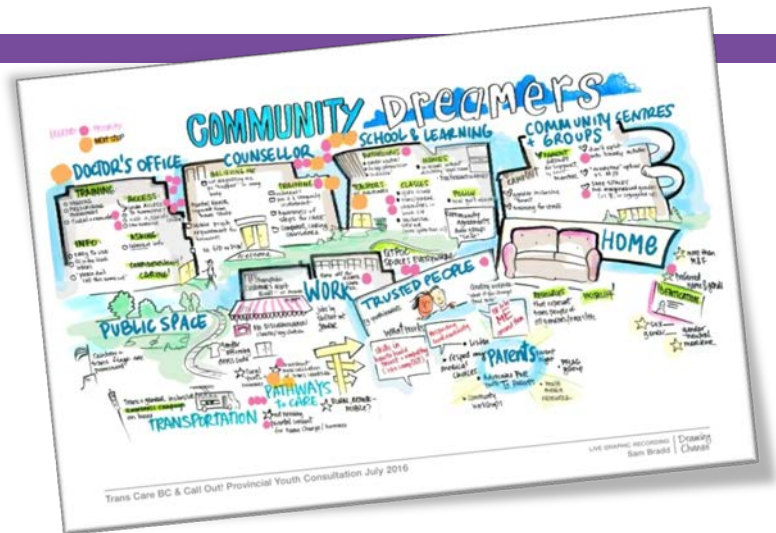
Community action planning event in the Comox Valley

## Young people & families

In the early days of program development at Trans Care BC, we quickly recognized the need to focus attention on youth, children and their families. We have recently done the following in order to move this work forward:

- Hired a collaborative practice lead whose focus is on youth, children and their families; the position was created, in part, to address current issues in the system of care for gender-creative, Two-Spirit and trans youth and children.
- Hired a family network consultant to advise on the design of provincial and regional peer support networks with and for families of gender-creative, Two-Spirit, trans youth and children.
- Provided multiple trainings to service providers around the province to build skills for working with youth and families.
- C.A.L.L. Out! and Trans Care BC collaborated on facilitating a series of Capacity Café workshops. This involved bringing together nine young trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary youth, representing each health authority (Northern, Fraser, Interior, Island and Vancouver Coastal) to speak to audiences of service providers,

Trans Care BC & C.A.L.L. Out! Provincial Consultation, July 2016



parents and caregivers, educators and faith leaders about their experiences of inclusion and safety in their communities.

We recognize the importance of accessible and gender-affirming care for youth, children and their families in communities around the province. We hope to work closely with the committed clinicians in our current system to develop a model of care and to increase the number of trained providers in BC.

At Trans Care BC, it is our intention to honour and support the work already happening in local communities, while also supporting the development of new initiatives in communities

where there may be fewer connections established. Our goal is to support regional and provincial family networks with direct involvement from families of gender-creative, Two-Spirit and trans children and youth.

In the coming year, we will be consulting with families across the province to learn more about local needs, to inform planning for local and provincial networks. We look forward to sharing more information and connecting with families around the province.

For further information, please visit: <http://transhealth.phsa.ca/support/families/parents-and-caregivers>

## Education team

Trans Care BC's small but dedicated education team is committed to increasing access to gender-affirming care across BC by raising care provider knowledge, competency and cultural safety.

### Online education, resources and toolkits:

The education team is developing online training, resources and toolkits for care providers in BC. Online training under development includes:

- Trans cultural safety introduction
- Mental health & well-being support
- Gender-affirming primary care



Training in Cranbrook, BC



Langley Division of Family Practice training

### In-person workshops are available for:

- Senior leadership teams in government, school and health organizations
- Indigenous communities looking to raise awareness and support for LGBT<sub>2</sub>Q+ people and their families
- Primary care teams who can directly increase access to gender-affirming medical care for clients
- Ministry of Children and Family Development and child and youth mental health teams

If the above describes your team and you are interested in a workshop, please email [Trans.Edu@phsa.ca](mailto:Trans.Edu@phsa.ca).

In the past six months we have visited a number of communities and organizations, including:

- Two-day health service provider trainings in Nelson, Kelowna and Cranbrook
- Chilliwack and Langley Divisions of Family Practice
- PHSA leadership team
- Child and adolescent psychiatry units at BC Children's Hospital
- Pediatrician residents at BC Children's Hospital
- UBC School of Nursing
- Providence Health Care psychology group

NOTE: The education team is not available for in-person trans introductory (101) trainings; however, we can connect you with options that may be available in your region.

## Indigenous and Two-Spirit engagement



Trans Care BC started an Indigenous community education and engagement process in April 2016, with the intention of completing several engagements in all five regional health authorities over an 18-month period. The process is aimed at providing education around LGBTQ<sub>2</sub>S with a specific focus on the transgender community, and dialogue to generate discussion about the needs of Indigenous communities.

Initial planning included consultation with First Nations Health Authority's chief medical officer, communications and community engagement leads along with the BC Association of Friendship Centres.

Trans Care BC has engaged Indigenous consultants, a Two-Spirit expert speaker/facilitator and has also hired Indigenous staff to support this work.

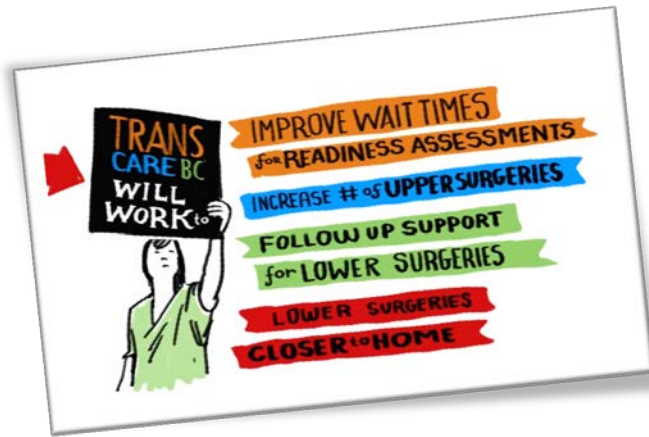
To date, two community events have been held in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region in Stl'at'imx communities and the three host Nations in Vancouver (held at Tsleil-Waututh Nation), which was also supported by VCH Aboriginal Health and Prevention teams.

Trans Care BC has also recently supported and attended the Aboriginal Youth LGBTQ<sub>2</sub>S conference in Victoria hosted by the local

Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Trans Care BC provided support in a range of ways including financial support for speakers and events, providing keynote/workshop presenters/facilitators as well as hosting information booths, and conducting reporting/evaluation for hosts.

The Victoria youth event was a partnership between First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Vancouver Island FNHA regional office and Trans Care BC. Eight engagement sessions are planned for 2017/18.

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON



## Post-operative care funding

Since October 2015, Trans Care BC has been covering aftercare payments for lower genital surgery in Montreal (at L'Ascelpiade). Clients no longer pay out-of-pocket expenses for this service. To date, over 98 clients have received aftercare funding for surgery.



## Improving surgical access

Over the past year, Trans Care BC, in consultation with stakeholders, has developed and submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Health to expand availability of surgical services within the province. If accepted, phased implementation would occur over three to five years.

## Out-of-country options for metoidioplasty and phalloplasty



Metoidioplasty and Phalloplasty are complex procedures and are known to have high complication rates. Trans Care BC has been working with the Medical Services Plan (MSP) to provide additional options in the US at centres in Austin, San Francisco and Chicago for BC patients undergoing these procedures.

For more information, please contact Trans Care BC's care coordination team at: 1-866-999-1514 or [transcareteam@phsa.ca](mailto:transcareteam@phsa.ca)

# Surgery

## Surgical care coordination

Trans Care BC's care coordination team includes health navigators, nurses, peers and admin support staff. The team has access to a medical director (physician) for consultation, as needed.

To date, they have worked with over 70 patients and care providers to assist with individualized care plans related to surgery.

## Quality improvement

For years, primary care providers have been concerned with the lack of consistent medical information for clients returning from out-of-province surgery.

In partnership with GRS Montreal, Trans Care BC has implemented a standard communication process and forms between the GRS clinic and BC care teams to share required information, and to improve pre- and post-operative care communication.

## Addressing surgical assessment waitlists across the province

A review showed that long waits for lower (genital) surgeries are occurring at the assessment phase. To address this historical backlog, Trans Care BC nurses are now trained and supported to provide low-barrier assessments both face-to-face and via telehealth (video sessions).

From May to November 2016, 67 patients were assessed for surgery readiness by Trans Care BC nurses.

The current estimated wait for lower surgeries is three to 12 months (depending on the procedure), following surgeon consult.

## Upper surgery

Historically, upper surgery chest volumes in BC over the past five years ranged from 30 to 42 per year. Since 2015, two surgeons in Victoria have been trained and supported to provide additional upper surgeries. During the first six months of this year, 51 surgeries were completed provincially, and year-end volumes are expected to be double that of prior years.

## Client experience survey

To gather baseline data, PHSa is working with the University of British Columbia's Stigma & Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC) to complete a survey about patient experience with assessment and surgery over the past five years. A peer reference group of trans individuals advised the researchers on survey questions, and were consulted on the methods and process.

Over 200 surveys and 35 detailed interviews were completed through summer and fall 2016. A final public report will be published in spring 2017.

