



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.

