

# Temple Gender Affirming Surgery Program

## Surgery Readiness Letters

### Why are letters required?

Surgery readiness letters (SRL) also known as mental health letters (MHL) state that the gender affirmation surgery you are seeking is medically necessary – a criterion insurance policies use to determine coverage for procedures. It also states that you understand the risk and benefits of surgery, are mentally stable and that your mental health or medical provider is available for follow up. SRLs are a requirement outlined by the WPATH SOC (World Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care). Temple Gender Affirming Surgeries Program adheres to WPATH SOC as do most insurances. Having your letter/s at the time of your consult is helpful for surgery planning and timing.

### Completed and signed letters must be sent as a PDF

- Letters can be emailed as **PDFs** to [genderaffirmingsurgery@tuhs.temple.edu](mailto:genderaffirmingsurgery@tuhs.temple.edu)
- **Letters must be sent as a PDF. Please do not send pictures or other file types.**
- Letters should be specific about which gender affirming surgery you are planning for.
- **Letters must include the signature of the provider and be written on letterhead.**
- Letters will be uploaded to your chart and submitted to your insurance.

### How many letters do I need?

In accordance with **WPATH 8 SOC**:

- Gender affirming surgeries require 1 letter from a credentialed mental health provider or hormone prescriber.
- Please check with your insurance to see if they have updated to SOC 8.
  - Many insurances have updated to the SOC 8, but not all, it is best to check with your insurance plan.
- If you feel empowered to advocate for SOC 8, please ask your insurance provider to update to SOC 8; link for SOC 8 is listed in the resources at the end of this document.

In accordance with **WPATH 7 SOC**:

- Top surgeries require 1 letter from a credentialed mental health provider.
- FGCS/FFS (facial gender confirmation surgery/facial feminization surgery) & trach shave require 1 letter from a credentialed mental health provider.
- Bottom surgeries: vaginoplasty, vulvoplasty, orchiectomy, hysterectomy, metoidioplasty and phalloplasty require 2 letters, from two separate credentialed mental health providers.

Additional Letter for FGCS

- Not Required but may increase likelihood of coverage for procedures
  - Can be written by a mental health professional or your primary care provider
  - Please reach out if you would like to be scheduled with Dr. Grand the program psychologist for an additional letter

### How long is the letter good for?

SRLs typically expires after 12 months. Some insurances require letters be dated within 6 months of your surgery date. Please check your specific insurance policy for details. Temple Gender Affirming Surgeries Program requires letters be dated within one year of surgery.

## Template for Surgery Letters

- A letter template can be found on the APA website:
  - **American Psychiatric Association: Writing Letters of Support to Insurers and Surgeons**  
<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/diversity/education/transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-patients/letter-writing>
- **In addition to the WPATH requirements Temple GA Surgeries Program also requires that the letter include your recovery plan.** Recovery plan includes financial considerations, time off of work if applicable, confirmation that you have safe and stable housing and who will be your support person/people/network (at least one support person is required for all gender affirming surgeries). Please be sure to share these requirements with your provider writing your letter for surgery.

## Finding a Mental Health Provider

If you do not have a mental health provider and would like a recommendation, a member of our team can provide you a list of local gender affirming therapists. All are well versed in writing letters for gender affirming surgeries that meet WPATH SOC requirements.

*+ If you are a patient of Mazzoni Center, Philadelphia FIGHT, or Planned Parenthood, please reach out to your provider to request a letter. They have staff who are credentialed and meet requirements to write surgery letters.*

## Working with Your Existing Mental Health Provider

If you already have a mental health provider who you have been working with, speak with them about your gender affirming surgery goals and request a letter for surgery.

*+ If they are new to the process, please direct them to the APA website and WPATH SOC listed and linked in this handout.*

## Letters are available through Temple, if you have decided to have your surgery with Temple.

- If you have decided to have your surgery through Temple Health and you are in need of a properly credentialed mental health provider for your letter, please reach out and request to be scheduled with Dr. Grand, the program psychologist.
- If your insurance requires 2 letters, Dr. Grand is available to write your second letter once the first letter has been received and is on file. Certain exceptions apply and can be discussed during the intake.

*+ Dr. Grand is only available to write letters for those seeking gender affirming surgeries with Temple Health, it cannot be used for outside surgeons. This will be stated in the letter.*

*+ Independence Blue Cross (IBX) updated their policy in January 2024 to require a psychiatrist or a PhD-level clinical psychologist to author the letter. If you have IBX please reach out to be scheduled with Dr. Grand.*

## Resources for Letter Writing

### American Psychiatric Association: Writing Letters of Support to Insurers and Surgeons

<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/diversity/education/transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-patients/letter-writing>

### WPATH 7 SoC (World Professional Association for Transgender Health 7 Standards of Care)

<https://www.wpath.org/publications/soc>

### WPATH 8 SoC (World Professional Association for Transgender Health 8 Standards of Care)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644>

### GALAP Harm Reduction Guide to Letter Writing

<https://www.thegalap.org/resources/harm-reduction-guide-to-referral-letters>

