



TRANS CARE BC

# PROGRAM UPDATE

APRIL 2019 - APRIL 2020



**TRANS CARE BC**  
Provincial Health Services Authority

## DIRECTOR

It is hard to believe the changes in our environment since the end of March when we wrapped up our 2019-20 fiscal year. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have weighed heavily on our hearts and minds. The pandemic's toll is far-reaching, as are the delays in care; these continue to be at the forefront as our team and network of providers do all that we can by virtual health means and work on reopening surgical pathways. The level of care and types of services that have become possible via secure video conferencing are a game changer for those who struggle to travel for care.

You'll see impressive progress within this update. The increases in surgical access since Trans Care BC began is the result of the collective efforts of our network of care providers, from primary care to specialists. With more physicians taking on gender-affirming care closer to home, the increase in access to surgical readiness assessments, and so many more surgeons involved in the care, we surpassed our own expectations for volumes of surgeries expected in 2019-20.

While last year brought unprecedented impact for Trans Care BC, we continue to address ongoing challenges as we look ahead, working diligently to support all aspects of trans health care remaining accessible wherever possible while we adjust to living through a global pandemic. Thank you to community members of all genders, care providers, allies, and partner programs for your collective efforts both past and present.

**Lorraine Grieves**

Provincial Director, Trans Care BC  
Provincial Health Services Authority

# WHAT IS TRANS CARE BC?

Trans Care BC is a provincial program working to enhance and coordinate 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.

B.C. is the first province in Canada to create a coordination body responsible for supporting a comprehensive network of care options provincially.



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

We are expanding and sustaining health care services by:

- Developing gender-affirming, client-centred models of care
- Working on equitable access to gender-affirming and supportive health care for children, youth, and families
- Supporting access to reliable information, resources and peer support for trans, gender diverse and Two-Spirit people, their families, friends and health service providers
- Offering advanced practice training and follow up support for clinicians around B.C.

Our vision is for a British Columbia where all people are able to access gender-affirming health care, and live, work, and thrive in their communities.

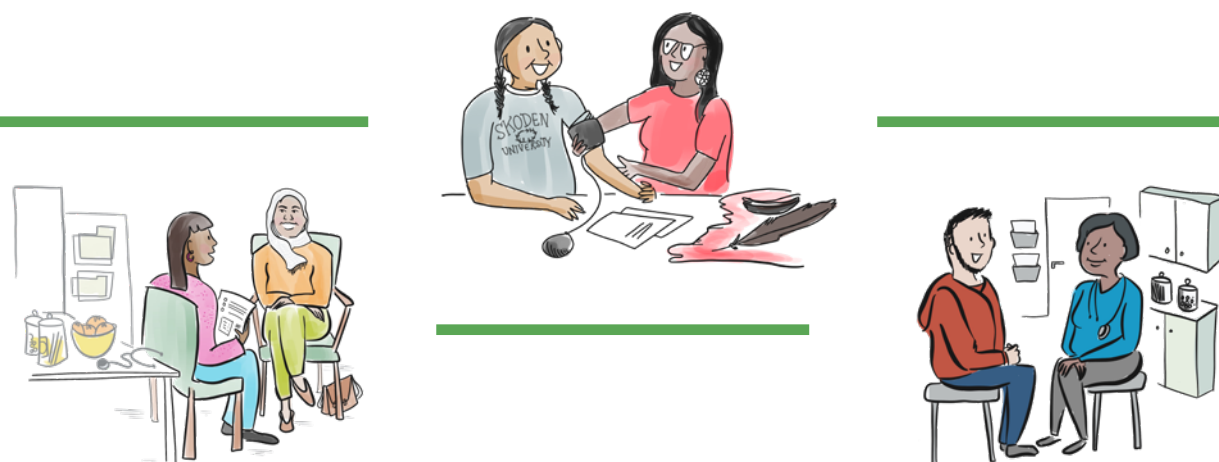


## EXPANDING PRIMARY CARE SUPPORT

In order to bring gender-affirming care closer to home, Trans Care BC continues to provide educational opportunities that help achieve our two key goals for primary care:

- Increase the number of primary care providers who deliver all aspects of care with a respectful and gender-affirming approach.
- Increase the number of primary care providers with clinical competency to provide trans-specific care.

Trans Care BC is working closely with regional health authorities, Divisions of Family Practice, and other key stakeholders to further embed trans care into the primary care service delivery model and continuing to make progress towards achieving these goals.



## KEY SUCCESSES AND PARTNERSHIPS:

- Since 2016, Trans Care BC has identified Burnaby as a region in need of improved access to gender-affirming primary care. In 2019, we developed a partnership with the Burnaby Division of Family Practice to identify clinicians willing and able to provide this type of care in the region. Through the Burnaby Division of Family Practice Patient Attachment Initiative, we surveyed physician members and created a referral process for trans and gender diverse patients, significantly improving primary care access for trans and gender diverse Burnaby residents.
- Trans Care BC has partnered with the Northern Health Authority, the Prince George Division of Family Practice, the Blue Pine Clinic, and Foundry Prince George to review gender-affirming health services in the Northern Health region. The project is expected to be complete by Fall 2020 and will provide recommendations to improve the capacity of local primary care providers to support trans patients closer to home.
- Trans Care BC partnered with Divisions of Family Practice across the province to provide in-person training. This included two highly sought-after CME-accredited primary care sessions offered in collaboration with Vancouver Coastal Health's Trans Specialty Care program and the South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice. In total, 40 primary care providers were trained, many of whom have continued to pursue education and mentorship opportunities to improve access to care for trans, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people in their communities.
- Trans Care BC worked with the Ministry of Health Sex and Gender Data Standards working group to evaluate gender and sex data elements in health information systems. This critical work continues into 2020.
- Trans Care BC continues to update the [Primary Care Toolkit](#) for gender-affirming care, which includes a recently added appendix on [HIV PrEP Considerations for Gender Diverse Patients](#).
- Fraser Health has been another region of focus for Trans Care BC given the large population of trans and gender diverse clients needing primary care access in this region. As new primary care initiatives emerge in this region, Trans Care BC continues to work in partnership to offer training and support for trans clients to access care. In 2020, Trans Care BC plans to partner with key stakeholders in the Fraser region to offer enhanced training opportunities for providers poised to take on trans health care.

# SURGERY

Improving access to gender-affirming surgical care for British Columbians throughout the patient journey is a high priority for Trans Care BC. We're responsible for coordinating and monitoring access to gender-affirming surgeries including upper surgeries (chest and breast construction) and lower surgeries (vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, and metoidioplasty) and do so in partnership with the Ministry of Health, regional health authorities, surgeons and patients.

## GENDER SURGERY PROGRAM BC OPENED FALL 2019:

In October 2019, Trans Care BC helped launch the **Gender Surgery Program BC** (GSP BC) located at Vancouver General Hospital. GSP BC is operated by Vancouver Coastal Health, open to all B.C. and Yukon residents, and is Western Canada's only publicly funded clinic providing gender-affirming lower surgeries.

GSP BC is comprised of a multidisciplinary team of health care providers and surgical specialists devoted to providing high-quality treatment and surgical care. Patients will receive care through the Gender Surgery Program through their entire surgical journey, including pre- and post-operative planning and care and routine follow up until discharged to their primary care provider.

## CHEST CONSTRUCTION & VAGINOPLASTY SURGERY NAVIGATION GUIDES & WORKBOOKS

Online, client-centred surgical access guides and printable workbooks were launched for **Chest Construction Surgery** (fall 2019) and **Vaginoplasty and Vulvoplasty** (winter 2020). These resources have been developed alongside surgical teams, care providers and clients in B.C., and are an initiative to improve client health literacy and enhanced recovery after surgery.

## SURGICAL PRE-REQUISITE HAIR REMOVAL UPDATE ASSESSMENT

In October 2019, medically-necessary, pre-operative hair removal became publicly funded for British Columbians accessing gender-affirming lower surgeries. This need is discussed with patients at the time of consult with the GSP BC surgeon who then writes a recommendation letter which triggers the funding. Trans Care BC is actively building a network of PHSA-approved electrologists across the province. At this time, hair removal for surgery preparation is done via electrolysis only which is based on current evidence regarding permanent hair removal, industry best practices, as well as the GSP BC surgeons' recommendations and requirements.

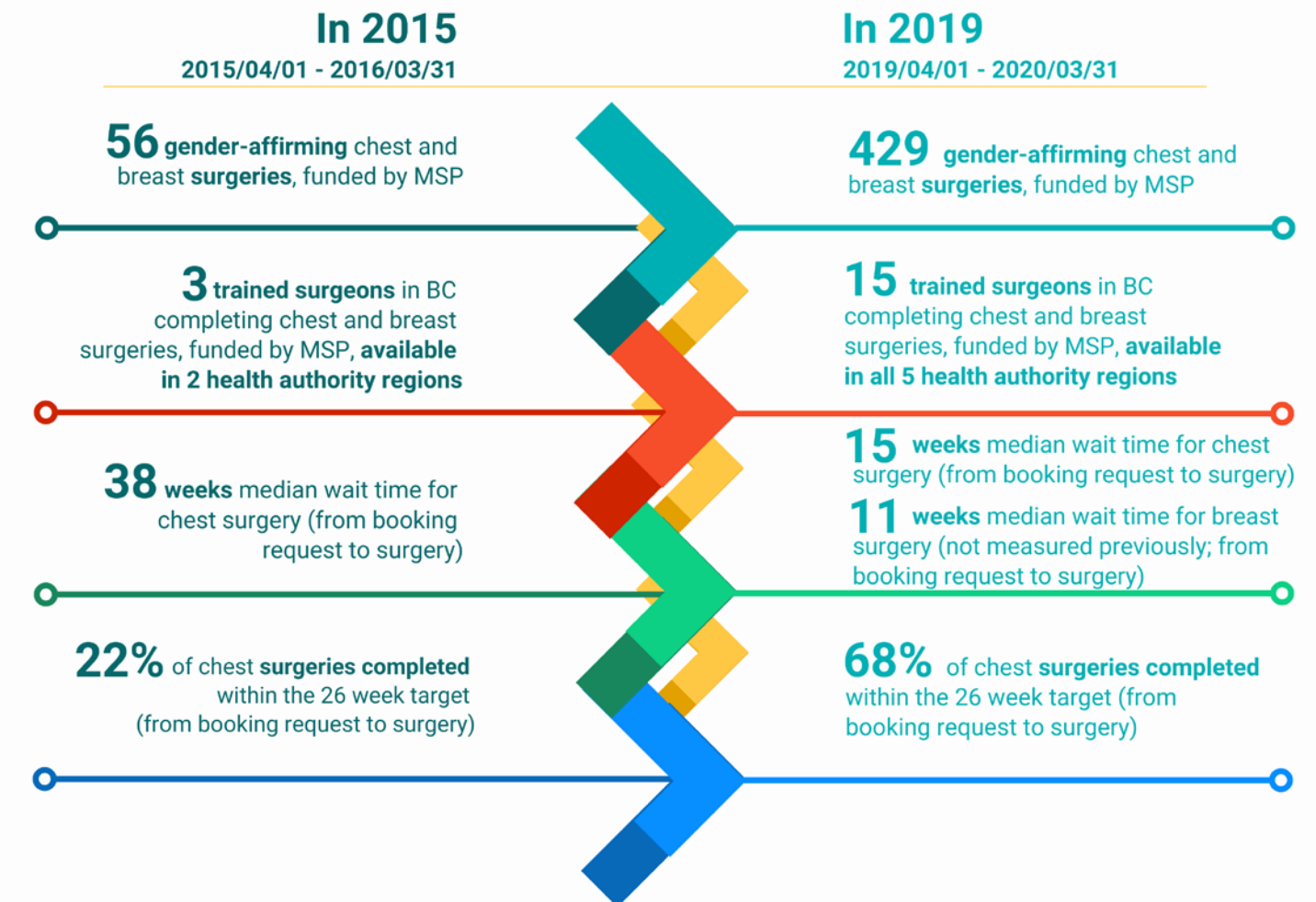
## IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SURGICAL READINESS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

We continue to improve access to surgical readiness assessment services with an emphasis on supporting primary care providers to do this work. With access varying across B.C., we make sure new readiness assessors are clinically supported through training and practice support opportunities. For clients who cannot access readiness assessment through other means, Trans Care BC has a small team of clinicians who provide this care planning step to clients. With the goal of bringing this care closer to home we achieved the following in 2019:

- Increased the number of surgical readiness assessors in B.C. from 58 to 83. Of these, some assessors provide more limited and/or specialized assessments.
- Our team completed more than 200 surgical readiness assessments.

## 2015 vs. 2019: The Numbers

## Improving Access to Gender-Affirming Chest and Breast Surgery in British Columbia





## MEET OUR CARE COORDINATION TEAM

Trans Care BC knows finding gender-affirming care and support close to home can be a challenge. That's why our Care Coordination Team works with service providers and community contacts to help people find care as close to home as possible. Our team of health navigators is easily accessible by phone and email and supported by medical advisors.



### 2019-2020 WAS A BUSY YEAR FOR THE CARE COORDINATION TEAM

- **3584** interactions with community members, family members, loved ones and service providers
- Among the most requested areas of support were:
  - o requests for **information about surgery**
  - o support seeking **gender-affirming primary care attachment**
  - o support seeking **hormone initiation**
- **92** clients were provided pre/post-operative clinical nursing support

### CHANGING KEYS

Changing Keys is an intensive speech and voice training program for people aged 18 and over, who want to work towards a more feminine vocal presentation. In 2019-20, the Changing Keys group ran in five health authority regions for 85 participants. The program takes place at different locations in B.C. throughout the year and is offered free of charge by Speech Language Pathologists with special training in voice feminization contracted through Trans Care BC.

### CONTACTING THE TEAM

The Care Coordination Team is based in Vancouver, but offers support to clients across the province via phone, email and virtual health (videoconferencing). You can find more information about the team online at [transcarebc.ca](https://transcarebc.ca).

## PEER & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Trans Care BC supports peer-led initiatives – such as trans support groups and groups for parents/caregivers of gender diverse children and youth – through funding, networking opportunities, and peer project support and mentorship.

### TRANS CARE BC PEER AND COMMUNITY GRANTS FUNDING

In 2019, Trans Care BC announced a funding call for peer support projects that resulted in funding for 22 initiatives across the province.

Funded projects had an opportunity to collaborate with PHSA's communications team to create [Peer Project Spotlight stories](#), stories that shine a light on important community work. Projects from Victoria, Fort Nelson, Vancouver, and Kelowna were featured.

In January 2020, we announced a new funding call for [Peer Support and Mental Health and Well-Being Services Grants](#), for up to \$20,000 per project.

### PROVINCIAL PEER AND COMMUNITY NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Trans Care BC hosted two provincial virtual meetings to facilitate networking, knowledge exchange and group learning between peer projects in B.C.

We also launched the Community Advisory Group, a provincial peer advisory group, comprised of youth, adults, parents/caregivers, and Two-Spirit voices. We've held six meetings so far with a broad range of topics discussed including education, child and youth care pathways, sexual health education and community engagement.

### PROVINCIAL PARENT/CAREGIVER SUPPORT THROUGH CAMPOUT!

In collaboration with UBC CampOUT!, Trans Care BC hosted an event for parents/caregivers of youth attending CampOUT! Sixteen participants came together to connect, share their experiences and learn together in a welcoming environment.

### PEER AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Trans Care BC launched a new resource: [the Peer Support Group Start-Up Guide for Trans, Gender Diverse, and Two-Spirit Adults](#).

### PRIDE

Trans Care BC attended 14 pride events across the province, offering gender-affirming resources and information to many community members and service providers.

### LAUNCH OF SERVICE INVENTORY ON WEBSITE

In August 2019, Trans Care BC launched a new [online service directory](#), which provides publicly accessible details on almost 100 provincial peer and community support initiatives.



# INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Trans Care BC continues to remain focused on building our capacity to ensure our information and resources are relevant to trans Indigenous and Two-Spirit community members. In our educational work, we have found engaging learners in deeper story-based content, taught by Two-Spirit team members in face-to-face teaching sessions, improves understanding about what it means to be Two-Spirit and their care needs. Evaluations have shown that learners have valued this approach.

To help improve access to learning, our Education Team is working on an online trans Indigenous and Two-Spirit learning module built around video-based storytelling and interviews capturing a variety of Two-Spirit community leaders from across B.C. We're now building an online module and expect it be released this fiscal year (2020-21).

We have continued to build relationships with Two-Spirit elders and programs that work with Two-Spirit people across the province. In the upcoming year, we're looking forward to supporting a number of Two-Spirit projects through our [2020 Peer Support and Mental Health and Well-Being Services Grants](#).

Trans Care BC partnered with Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) to host two Trans Indigenous / Two-Spirit Youth Learn + Share Sessions. Youth from a variety of Indigenous communities living on the lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples shared their stories, feedback and ideas about existing health and wellness supports. Based on youth feedback, we heard a number of ideas and opportunities that Trans Care BC and UNYA summarized into key next steps and suggested actions.



We've also explored our own team's learning needs around Indigenous cultural safety, ensuring our Care Coordination Team have information for Indigenous clients on specific access points that may be available for trans Indigenous and Two-Spirit individuals reaching out for support.

# YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES

Trans Care BC's efforts this year were focused on training care providers and supporting gender-affirming practice with young people and their caregivers/families. We continued to build practice support and training tools as well as build on partnerships with key programs and providers to increase capacity to meet the needs of trans, Two-Spirit and gender diverse youth and their families.



## Practice support tools

We've found that many clinicians aren't trained to conduct basic screening, sensitive to gender health needs, for those youth who identify as trans or gender diverse in some way. In collaboration with a clinical provincial working group comprised of key experts in gender-affirming care with youth, Trans Care BC developed a practice support tool designed to support care planning for trans and gender diverse youth. Developing part one of the tool – the Screener Supplement – has been informed by feedback from various groups including parents, youth and mental health clinicians. Beginning in early 2020, the tool is being piloted by child and youth providers across the province with the hopes of sharing it more broadly later in the year.



## Training for service providers working with youth and families

Trans Care BC offered four large, one- and two-day in-person trainings and workshops covering topics such as working with neurodiverse youth (a Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health workshop) and supporting trans youth to access their health needs in the high school setting.



## Partnering with Foundry centres across B.C.

Trans Care BC has continued to foster partnerships with [Foundry](#) – a provincial initiative dedicated to improving access to health and wellness resources, services and supports, delivered both online and through integrated service centres across BC – to support the delivery of equitable health care to trans, gender diverse and Two-Spirit youth across the province.

To help with this goal, we started a provincial working group with interested Foundry leaders and service providers to share learnings across the network and to work on continued improvements in providing respectful and culturally safer care to trans and gender diverse youth and their families. We also offered three in-person training sessions at Foundry centres in Victoria, Penticton and Kelowna training a total of 123 providers from a range of disciplines.



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## EDUCATION

Trans Care BC is committed to increasing access to gender-affirming care across B.C. by raising care provider knowledge, competency and cultural safety.

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### LAUNCH OF GENDER DIVERSITY INTRODUCTORY ONLINE MODULES:

More than 2,500 people have already completed Trans Care BC's new [gender diversity online training modules](#)!

In addition, Trans Care BC launched a [CME-accredited online module](#) on gender-affirming primary care in collaboration with UBC Continuing Professional Development with over 300 health care professionals enrolled in 2019. The Education Team continues to collaborate with key stakeholders to develop modules covering topics such as advanced primary care, Two-Spirit and Indigenous trans health considerations, and child and youth trans health and wellness.

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### NEW SUPPORT TOOLS & RESOURCES

In 2019, Trans Care BC developed and launched more than a dozen clinical and non-clinical support tools and resources for care providers and clients covering key topics including: [sexual health screening and pelvic exams](#), [binding and tucking](#), and [HIV PrEP considerations for gender diverse patients](#) as well as a [range of other topics](#).



### IN-PERSON TRAINING SESSIONS IN 2019

Trans Care BC presented to nearly 900 physicians, nurse practitioners and allied professionals across the province.

With the launch of the [Vancouver Coastal Health Gender Surgery Program BC](#), Trans Care BC provided 21 training sessions to more than 500 care providers and staff to ensure GSP BC patients receive culturally safe care throughout their surgical journey. Training took place at Vancouver General Hospital and UBC Hospital.

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### ONGOING CLINICAL SUPPORT INITIATIVES:

Trans Care BC launched a revamped [Clinical Mentorship Call](#) in fall 2019, a weekly, lunch-hour meeting for physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, registered clinical counsellors and registered health care professionals. Participation has steadily increased with mentors from a variety of disciplines and practice settings including primary care, endocrinology, mental health, and obstetrics.

Trans Care BC hosted quarterly [Clinical Speaker Series](#) events in 2019. These sessions are an opportunity for registered health care providers to learn from experts from a variety of disciplines about approaches, best practices, and lessons learned in supporting trans, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people.

