Trans Care BC
Program Update
Message from the director

As we pass by Trans Care BC’s second year as a program, we are grateful for the community voices that have informed planning and program design, to improve care and services for trans, gender diverse and Two-Spirit people.

One of the ways we’ve sought input was supporting the University of British Columbia’s Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre survey and in-depth interviews on patient experiences of gender-affirming surgical assessment and care. The survey results were published in October 2017 and will inform and improve surgery-related work going forward.

We’ve been clarifying standard pathways for surgical assessment and referral, and working with the Ministry of Health and health authorities on how to improve access to upper and lower surgeries in BC. So far in 2018, more plastic surgeons have been trained to provide gender-affirming upper body surgeries.

The provincial central wait list for upper surgery that formerly sat with one surgeon’s office is now temporarily supported by Trans Care BC to support communication with patients about their status on the wait list.

To build further knowledge and expertise about gender-affirming care among primary health care providers, we’ve held intro and advanced practice education sessions in each health authority region of the province. This has increased the number of primary care providers that can provide both hormone and surgical assessments and gender-affirming care.

Within our Primary Care Working Group we developed a toolkit to support newly trained care providers in providing gender-affirming care. The toolkit is a new resource for general practitioners and nurse practitioners.

In spring 2017, Trans Care BC launched three funding opportunities to expand capacity of peer and community supports. These opportunities focused on piloting a clinically supervised peer support group model called Gender Journeys, establishing provincial parent and caregiver groups and peer and community funded projects within the Island Health Authority. Further funding will be announced later in 2018.

We are in the process of developing a new website to improve access to information for clients and care providers. The site is expected to launch in June. In the meantime, information can be found on transhealth.phsa.ca and phsa.ca/transcare.

On behalf of our team, thank you for your support and partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of trans people. We look forward to continued collaboration in 2018. All the best to you and your loved ones.

Lorraine Grieves, MA, RCC
Provincial Program Director
Trans Care BC
Provincial Health Services Authority
Trans Care BC is a provincial program working 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.

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-centered models of care
• Working on equitable access to gender-affirming and supportive health care for children and youth
• Supporting access to information, resources and peer support for trans and gender diverse individuals, their families, friends and health service providers
• Offering advanced practice training and follow up for clinicians around BC

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.

What is Trans Care BC?

Trans Care BC is a provincial program working 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.

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.

Expanding primary care support

Trans Care BC is supporting the development of a standard framework for gender-affirming and supportive health care. The need for this work has been informed by recommendations from the 2014/15 Trans Health Steering Committee.

The steering committee identified goals of developing gender-affirming, client-centered models of service that would lead to equitable access and supportive health care as close to home as possible.

We established a primary care working group to develop a standard care model for adults, older adults and older youth. The working group included health care providers with primary care expertise and knowledge of trans care, as well as community members.

Primary Care Toolkit

Primary care providers have a crucial role to play in caring for trans patients. They can provide education and counselling, make connections with support groups and other resources, and assist in accessing gender-affirming medical and surgical treatments.

A Primary Care Toolkit was developed in collaboration between Trans Care BC and our primary care working group to support clinicians providing gender-affirming care.

The toolkit includes resources on the social, medical and surgical aspects of gender-affirming care, including information on readiness assessments, starting and maintaining hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgical options and how to facilitate access to these treatments. Additionally, the toolkit contains further reading and suggestions for where to find support and guidance from more experienced clinicians.

In 2018, Trans Care BC will be launching more comprehensive educational tools and trainings.
Care coordination team

We know that finding care and support close to home can be a challenge. Trans Care BC’s care coordination team works with service providers and community contacts to help people navigate how to find care as close to home as possible.

We support:
• Youth, adults, children and families
• Caregivers, partners, teachers, friends
• Health care providers including 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 gender-affirming 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

Changing Keys
Changing Keys is an intensive speech and voice training program for people aged 18 and over, who want to work toward a more feminine vocal presentation. The program takes place at different locations in BC throughout the year and is offered free of charge by Trans Care BC. If you are interested in taking part in the Changing Keys program, please contact the care coordination team.

How can I contact the team?
The care coordination team is based in Vancouver, but offers support to clients across the province via phone, email and telehealth (videoconferencing). You can find more information about the team online at transhealth.phsa.ca.

The team is available by phone Monday to Friday. You can fill in a contact form at transhealth.phsa.ca/contact-us, call us toll-free at 1-866-999-1514 or email transcarebc@phsaca. 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.

FAST FACTS - April 2018

150+ Surgical readiness assessments completed by Trans Care BC nurses and physician since May 2016.

180+ Clients have been supported to find the care they need by the care coordination team since fall 2015.

2000+ Clients and service providers have been assisted with information, navigation, support and referrals by the care coordination team since Fall 2015.

Surgery

Improving access to gender-affirming care for British Columbians is a top priority for Trans Care BC and the Ministry of Health - here are the ways we’re working together to achieve this:

Upper surgery

Trans Care BC is working to increase the number of chest and breast surgeries performed across the province. The number of upper surgeries has been growing each year. In 2017/2018, 178 surgeries were completed, compared to 102 in 2016/2017, 56 in 2015/2016, and 38 in 2014/2015.

Training new surgeons for upper surgery

Trans Care BC is working in collaboration with existing surgeons and regional health authorities to train surgeons in gender-affirming procedures. Earlier in 2018, surgeons from each regional health authorities attended a workshop. The goal is to increase the number of surgeons available to perform gender-affirming upper surgeries outside of Vancouver and Victoria.

Central wait list for publicly-funded upper surgeries

Since January 2018, Trans Care BC has temporarily taken on coordination of the existing waitlist for publicly funded upper surgeries, previously managed by one surgeon’s office. Clients can choose the first available surgeon or a specific surgeon from the group of surgeons currently working from the waitlist.

Lower surgery

Trans Care BC is working on bringing gender-affirming lower surgery as close to home as possible. Discussions with regional health authorities are underway about how to best move forward and to conduct a feasibility assessment in performing gender-affirming lower surgeries in BC.

Trans Care BC continues to support the coordination of gender affirming lower surgeries for clients. This includes coverage of aftercare payments for surgeries conducted in Montreal as well as for Medical Services Plan (MSP) approved out-of-country procedures for metoidioplasty and phalloplasty.
Surgical assessment wait lists
A review showed that long waits for gender-affirming lower surgeries were occurring at the assessment phase. Trans Care BC is providing low-barrier assessments in both face-to-face and video sessions, in order to reduce these wait times.

Trans Care BC continues to increase the number of publicly funded surgical assessors in the province through education and training initiatives. In 2017, workshops were held in Victoria, Nanaimo and Terrace, which trained an additional 14 publicly funded assessors. This increases the number of publicly funded assessors from 26, reported last year, to 40.

Surgical experience survey
PHSA supported the University of British Columbia's Stigma & Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre on a survey of patient experiences with surgical assessments over the past five years. The survey revealed gaps in the system of care and made recommendations for changes that align with many changes already underway. The survey results, published in October 2017, are informing our work now and in the future.

Peer & community support
Gathering input from trans, Two-Spirit and gender diverse communities and families is critical to the development of a provincial network of services. The peer and community support team continues to connect with communities to identify needs and opportunities to work together to provide care and support closer to home.

Input from the community
In partnership with Island Health, a series of knowledge exchange and community action sessions with community members and service providers were held in 2017. These sessions indicated:

- More peer and community supports are needed
- Resources and support are needed for existing peer-led groups, such as funding, logistics support, and event organizing
- Support for mentorship and opportunities for collaboration and networking are needed for peer facilitators and community members who are leading peer support groups

The findings from planning sessions were key in refining the next steps of the work in the region.

2017/2018 Highlights

- 17 peer and community projects were funded in 2017
- A Trans Health Community Resource Fair was held in Vancouver in fall 2017
- Regional Community Network Coordinators were put in place in the Northern, Island and Vancouver regions. Coordinators are a key contact for local groups and networking activities, they support funded projects and ensure the flow of information between groups

Gender Journeys
Gender Journeys is a free eight-week support group that explores gender identity and expression in a supportive environment. The peer and community support team supported the launch of four Gender Journeys courses across BC in the fall of 2017. The four locations were chosen from a call for applications in the spring of 2017. A second call for applications will be announced later in 2018.
Indigenous and Two-Spirit

Trans Care BC is engaging with Indigenous communities across BC, offering presentations about decolonizing sex and gender, and hosting dialogues on what communities need to encourage welcoming and sustainable environments for trans and Two-Spirit people who are seeking and accessing gender-affirming care.

We have been doing this work with an Indigenous consultation team and a Two-Spirit knowledge keeper and community organizer, as well as with the involvement of our own Indigenous and Two-Spirit staff members.

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

The stories and information that we’re gathering, and the connections we’re making at these community events will inform our engagement and education strategies and help us shape our programming to include and centre on the needs of Indigenous communities.

Visiting communities
To date, we’ve visited communities in the Northern, Interior and Island Health regions, and we will be going to community gatherings in the Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health regions later in 2018. Trans Care BC will also be supporting the upcoming Aboriginal Youth LGBTQ2S conference in 2018 hosted by the Victoria Aboriginal Friendship Centre.

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. This led to the formation of a Child and Youth Working Group, which concluded in June 2017. The findings of this group, with input from Child Health BC, informed a proposed new child and youth model of care.

The working group recommends that trans health services should be integrated as much as possible into existing service points and take into account holistic and comprehensive health care journeys.

In 2018, further work will be done to clarify care pathways and to develop training tools and resources in partnership with key stakeholders.

Funding opportunities
In 2017, seven community projects for caregivers and families of trans youth received funding from Trans Care BC. The opportunity was for parent and caregiver peer and community support providers to develop new peer support projects or help support services that already exist. This funding is just one step toward our long-term goal of building more regional and provincial peer support for gender creative, transgender and Two-Spirit youth and children and their families. The projects will be evaluated and if successful, there will be further funding opportunities in 2018.
Education

Trans Care BC’s 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 Trans Care BC education team is developing new online education tools for care providers and the general public. Online training under development includes:

- Introduction to trans cultural safety
- Mental health & well-being support
- Gender-affirming primary care

If you’re a primary care provider, you can now take a one-hour webinar from Trans Care BC Medical Director, Dr. Marria Townsend. (Improving Care for Transgender Patients: An Introduction to Gender-Affirming Primary Care.) To take the seminar follow the link https://ubccpd.ca/resources/archived/webinars and select November 22nd.

In-person workshops are available for:

- Senior leadership teams in government, education and health organizations
- Indigenous communities looking to raise awareness and support for LGBT2Q+
- 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 gwen.haworth@phsa.ca.

Trainings in 2017
Over the past year the education team has visited a number of communities and organizations to present an introduction to gender-affirming practice, including:

- Two-day health service provider trainings in Surrey and Courtenay-Comox
- Two-day physician and nurse practitioner trainings in Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Victoria and Terrace
- One-day training at St. Paul’s Hospital, Vancouver
- One-day trans intro training with PHSA’s Children & Adolescent Psychiatric Emergency group
- One-day trans intro training course at UBC School of Social Work
- One-day trans intro training with PHSA’s Provincial Language Service

The team presented and co-facilitated at the 2017 Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health conference.

CONTACT TRANS CARE BC

Email: transcarebc@phsa.ca
Toll-free: 1-866-999-1514
Website: www.phsa.ca/transcare