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FACTS: Gender Reassignment Surgery in Alberta

Purpose

In June 2012, the Province of Alberta reinstated funding for Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS, also sometimes known as SRS, or Sex Reassignment Surgery). This sheet is intended to provide facts to help Albertans seeking to pursue funding for GRS through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. (Note: This fact sheet does not constitute medical or legal advice.)

Individual Eligibility

Eligible individuals are those who are diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder (GID) by a psychiatrist with a special interest in GID. Individuals diagnosed with GID who also meet the Province's funding criteria will be eligible for final-stage GRS funding. Patients must be over 18 and "... a permanent resident of Canada and have lived in Alberta for at least twelve (12) months prior to the application for funding of final stage GRS ..." (*Criteria*, p. 1). Additionally, patients must have completed one year of the Real-Life Experience as defined in the *Standards of Care* (2001), pp. 17-18. One year hormone therapy must also be completed (*Criteria*, p.1).

References:

Bulletin: Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. *Med 166a: Final Stage Gender Reassignment Surgery Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

Bulletin Med 166a: *Final Stage GRS Program Criteria*. (pp. 1-2). Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

World Professional Association for Transgender Health; Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. (2001). *Standards Of Care For Gender Identity Disorders, Sixth Version*. Retrieved from <http://www.wpath.org/documents/2/socv6.pdf>

Coverage Includes

The Final Stage GRS Program is limited to surgery associated with vaginoplasty or phalloplasty and includes coverage for economy-class airfare and transportation to and from the clinic. Only surgeries performed at the Clinique de Chirurgie in Montréal are covered by this program.

References:

Bulletin: Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. *Med 166a: Final Stage Gender Reassignment Surgery Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

Coverage Does Not Include

Just as with many other medical conditions, Alberta Health does not cover all associated treatment costs for Gender Identity Disorder. Examples of procedures not covered at this time include tracheal shave, electrolysis or laser hair removal. Additional expenses associated with surgical recovery are also not included. A list of items required for recovery will be provided by Clinique de Chirurgie after surgery is booked. The Final Stage GRS Program also does not cover surgeries performed outside Canada.

References:

Bulletin: Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. *Med 166a: Final Stage Gender Reassignment Surgery Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

Bulletin Med 166a: *Final Stage GRS Program Criteria*. (pp. 1-2). Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

Patient Requirements

The *Final Stage GRS Program Criteria* document lists many requirements that must be met before a patient will be authorised for surgery. Among other requirements, the patient must:

- be sufficiently physically fit to have major surgery
- have realistic goals and expectations of the surgery
- have follow-up outpatient support provided in Alberta, and
- provide informed consent. (*Criteria*, pp. 1-2)

The patient must not have:

- any significant physical health problems that would contraindicate or complicate the surgery
- current substance abuse (drug or alcohol) problems
- antisocial or behavioural issues
- certain uncontrolled psychiatric disorders, as well as other requirements (*Criteria*, pp. 1-2).

Please see the *Criteria* document for more details.

References:

Bulletin Med 166a: *Final Stage GRS Program Criteria*. (pp. 1-2). Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

GRS Application Process

The *Final Stage GRS Program Criteria* document lists eight items that must be included. This information is gathered and submitted by the patient's psychiatrist who must be listed with the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons as having a special interest in GID.

Specific forms the psychiatrist must use to accompany this application are available from the Special Programs Unit of Alberta Health.

Once an individual has met the program criteria and has a recommendation to request final-stage GRS funding from a psychiatrist with a special interest in GID, a number of items must be presented to the Special Programs Unit to determine that program requirements are met.

Once the application and supporting documents are received by the Special Programs Unit, the application will be reviewed by an Alberta Health Medical Consultant and a decision will be made.

References:

Bulletin Med 166a: *Final Stage GRS Program Criteria*. (pp. 1-2). Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/AHCIP-Bulletin-Med-166A-2012.pdf>

For More Information

For more information about seeking funding for GRS under the Final Stage GRS Program, please contact the Special Program Unit directly at 780.415.8744

Revision Note

This sheet originally referred to *Bulletin Med 166*, now replaced with *Bulletin Med 166a* to also include economy-class airfare coverage. All references have been updated to reflect this change.