

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Standard Operating Procedures

Policy Name: Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Gender Dysphoria

Policy Number: 508.40

Effective Date: 9/20/2023

Page Number: 1 of 5

Authority:
Commissioner

Originating Division:
Health Services Division
(Mental Health)

Access Listing:
Level I: All Access

I. Introduction and Summary: The purpose of this policy is to describe the process by which offenders are identified, evaluated, and treated by mental health services for Gender Dysphoria. This policy also identifies the requirements for inter-departmental communication associated with specific concerns of Gender Non-Conforming offenders.

II. Authority:

- A. Prison Rape Elimination Act (2012); and
- B. Georgia Department of Corrections Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 208.06 PREA-Sexually Abusive Behavior Prevention and Intervention Program, 220.09 Classification and Management of Transgender and Intersex Offenders, 507.04.68 Management and Treatment of Offenders Diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria, 508.14 Mental Health Reception Screen, and 508.15 Mental Health Evaluations, and.

III. Definitions:

- A. **Gender Dysphoria** - A mental health disorder characterized by clinically significant distress and impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning secondary to a marked incongruence between an individual's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender.
- B. **Gender Identity** - A category of social identity that refers to an individual's identification as male, female, or some category other than male or female. Gender Identity is an internal construct independent of anatomical genitalia at birth or sexual orientation.
- C. **Gender Non-Conforming** - When a person's appearance or manner does not conform to traditional societal gender expectations.
- D. **Intersex** - When a person's sexual or reproductive anatomy or chromosomal pattern does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female.

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E. **Transgender** - When a person's Gender Identity does not correspond to that person's biological sex assigned at birth. Only determined by self-report.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Screening and Evaluation of Diagnostic Offenders:

1. Mental Health Reception Screen (Form M30-01-01):

- a. During the diagnostic process a Mental Health Reception Screen (SOP 508.14 Mental Health Reception Screen), will be completed by a mental health counselor, mental health technician or behavior specialist. This screen will assess for potential mental health problems and Gender Identity issues including Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, and/or Intersex concerns.
- b. If the mental health professional notes Gender Identity concerns, the offender will be referred for further evaluation in accordance with SOP 508.14.

2. Mental Health Evaluation for Services (Form M31-0001):

- a. If an offender is referred for further mental health evaluation, Form M31-0001, in accordance with SOP 508.15 Mental Health Evaluations, will be completed by a mental health counselor, mental health technician or behavior specialist. This evaluation will assess for mental health symptoms and service needs including concerns related to Gender Identity.
- b. If significant symptomatology is noted, the offender will be referred for a diagnostic evaluation by a psychologist/psychiatrist/Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).

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3. Initial Psychiatric/Psychological Evaluation (Form M60-01-06):

- a. The psychologist/psychiatrist/APRN will review the completed Mental Health Evaluation for Services, conduct a mental status examination, and assign a diagnosis as appropriate.
- b. If a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria and/or other mental health condition is assigned, the offender will be placed on the mental health caseload and classified at an appropriate level of care.
- c. Offenders self-identified as Transgender that do not meet criteria for Gender Dysphoria will have this condition documented on the Problem List located in the medical record. A Mental Health Diagnosis List (Form M20-01-05) will be completed that documents Transgender condition with an explanation of why the offender does not meet criteria for Gender Dysphoria (i.e., absence of clinically significant distress or functional impairment secondary to Transgender status). The offender will be designated as Level 1 and not added to the caseload, unless the offender has additional diagnoses requiring mental health treatment.

B. Evaluation of Gender Dysphoria in Offenders Currently on the Mental Health Caseload:

1. An offender on the mental health caseload may be self-referred or staff referred for an evaluation by a psychologist/psychiatrist/APRN for Gender Dysphoria.
2. If a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria is assigned by the psychologist/psychiatrist/APRN, then appropriate changes shall be made on the Diagnosis List and the Comprehensive Treatment Plan (Form M50-01-02).

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C. Evaluation of Gender Dysphoria in Offenders Not Currently on the Mental Health Caseload:

1. Upon receipt of a self or staff referral other than through the diagnostic process, a mental health counselor, mental health technician or behavior specialist will complete a Mental Health Evaluation for Services. The information obtained shall be documented on the Mental Health Evaluation Form (Form M31-01-01) and on the lower portion of the Mental Health Referral Form (Form M35-01-01). If it is determined the offender has symptoms/concerns related to Gender Identity, referral will be made to the psychologist/psychiatrist/APRN to complete the Initial Psychiatric/ Psychological Evaluation.
2. If it is determined that the offender is not in need of mental health services or further evaluation, the Mental Health Referral Form with the Mental Health Evaluation Form will be placed in the offender's medical record (section 5).

D. All offenders who identify as Transgender and request hormone treatment, whether or not they meet criteria for Gender Dysphoria, will be referred to the Medical Department to be evaluated and referred to an endocrinologist or other appropriate provider.

E. Mental Health Treatment for Gender Dysphoria:

1. All mental health clinical staff will be trained in gender-informed sensitivity.
2. Treatment for Gender Dysphoria will be reflected on the Comprehensive Treatment Plan.
3. The full range of mental health services at a facility will be available to the offender with Gender Dysphoria as clinically appropriate.

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F. Inter-Departmental Communication:

1. If a Transgender offender communicates concerns about safety, discrimination, or medical needs to a mental health staff member, these concerns will be immediately communicated to the mental health unit manager and clinical director/staff psychologist, who will immediately convey the concerns to the relevant departmental manager and warden.
2. Mental Health Disciplinary Report Evaluations (Form M34-01-01 and M34-01-02) of Transgender offenders will consider gender issues as a mitigating factor.

V. **Attachments:** None.

VI. **Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:** None.