



## GENDER-AFFIRMING VOICE THERAPY TALKING POINTS

Language is dynamic, and terminology evolves. The terminology on this page reflects terms currently used in health care and education policy. When treating members of the transgender and gender nonconforming community, clinicians are encouraged to ask their client what terminology they (the client) use.

### Gender-Affirming Health Care and Speech-Language Pathologists

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), gender-affirming health care can include any single intervention or combination of interventions—including social, psychological, behavioral, or medical (including hormonal treatment or surgery)—designed to support and affirm an individual’s gender identity when it conflicts with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) serve within their scope of practice as members of an interprofessional gender-affirming care team.
- SLPs can help patients safely modify their voice and communication behaviors—including verbal and nonverbal communication, such as vocal pitch, intonation, voice quality, resonance, fluency, articulation, pragmatics, and vocalization (e.g., laughing)—through evidence-based interventions and patient-focused functional goals.

### Insurance Coverage and Payment

- Unless prohibited by law, SLPs may provide gender-affirming voice therapy based on their clinical expertise regardless of health insurance coverage or other diagnoses. Providers and patients should be aware that insurance coverage for services related to gender-affirming voice therapy is variable.
- Some insurance plans that cover gender affirmation services, such as voice therapy, may require a medical diagnosis of “Gender Dysphoria” under the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) or the *International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification* (ICD-10-CM). Some plans may also require prior authorization or letters from certain members of the patient’s health care team. However, requirements are variable, so it is best to check with the insurance plan directly or review the Explanation of Benefits for information.

### Federal Law and Policy Protects Individuals From Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

- Consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the federal government currently interprets that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act’s prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sex includes sexual orientation and gender identity. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have issued notices of interpretation that this includes legal protections under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, respectively.

## ASHA CONTACTS

Legislation in the states: [states@asha.org](mailto:states@asha.org)

Federal laws, regulations, and guidance: [reimbursement@asha.org](mailto:reimbursement@asha.org)

## **State Laws and Policies Are Attempting to Restrict Access to Gender-Affirming Care**

- States are advancing laws and regulatory policies that would restrict patient access to gender-affirming care and restrict clinicians' ability to provide such care.
- These efforts have a serious negative effect on the health of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals across the country.
- Ongoing litigation over these laws and policies will create uncertainty for patients and providers for the foreseeable future.

## **Take Action to Ensure Access to Gender-Affirming Care**

- ASHA opposes legislative and regulatory policy efforts to (a) inhibit patient access to gender-affirming care and (b) restrict clinicians' ability to provide such care.
- ASHA is concerned by legislative and regulatory policies that raise questions regarding the ability of SLPs to provide care that respects all of their patients' needs or the ability of providers to feel safe in their workplaces, even when those policies do not specifically address gender-affirming care by SLPs.
- ASHA is actively monitoring these policy efforts and working with its state associations to strategically engage, as appropriate. Members should contact their state association and licensing board for questions specific to the state(s) where they practice.
- ASHA members can share information with state policymakers about (a) the role that SLPs play in providing gender-affirming care and (b) the negative impact on patients that restrictions can cause.
- ASHA members seeking information on broader access to general-affirming care policy efforts can find links to other organizations and legislative trackers at [Gender-Affirming Voice Therapy](#).