

GENDER AFFIRMING SURGERY NAVIGATION PROCESS

How do I access gender affirming surgery as a Callen-Lorde patient?

Callen-Lorde does not provide gender affirming surgery for patients, but we can help you navigate the process, including:

- Finding a surgeon
- Insurance navigation
- Information about surgical procedures
- Care planning for your upcoming surgery
- Support letters from your PCP and mental health providers for insurance coverage

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TransAtlas.Callen-lorde.org

The first step to navigating the surgery process as a Callen-Lorde patient is to talk to a Callen-Lorde Medical Provider to complete a Gender Affirming Perioperative Services screener. You can schedule a virtual appointment to do this by calling our office at 212-271-7200 and confirming the surgery you are coordinating, the surgeon you'll be seeing and the insurance coverage you'll be using.

If you do not have a list of surgeons or insurance for surgery, see below. If you know who your surgeon is going to be, what surgery you're having and have active insurance for surgery, skip to here.

Finding a surgeon

It's important to find a surgeon that you feel safe with, is accessible to you, and has experience in the surgery that you're looking for (Safety, accessibility, experience). We encourage folks to consider scheduling consultations with a couple of different surgeons to be sure your needs are addressed. Check out the Callen-Lorde TransAtlas for a list of community resources and surgeons that perform gender-affirming procedures! <https://transatlas.callen-lorde.org/>

Insurance navigation

When we know the insurance plan we will have at the time of surgery, we can plan for the documents and requirements that we will have to provide insurance for the procedure, testing and appointments around surgery to be paid for.

There are several different plans that we may qualify for depending on employment and income. Callen-Lorde's Facilitated Enrollment team can support patients in signing up for insurance.

Information about surgical procedures

Patient education sessions with a GAPS Surgery Doula discuss specific procedures, preparation for surgery and recovery, and community resource referrals. Patients may also be scheduled for these appointments to discuss insurance needs and questions about selecting a surgeon or preparing for a consultation. You can schedule a patient education appointment with a GAPS Surgery Doula by calling our office at 212-271-7200 and letting us know what you would like to discuss with a surgery doula.

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How to get letters of support for surgery:

1. **Complete a GAPS screener** with a Callen-Lorde Medical Provider. Let them know if you need a letter for a consultation or if it's to book a surgery date.
2. **If this is for a consultation (consultation letters);** Within a week after completing the screening you will get a phone call from the mental health department to schedule an appointment with a therapist for a consultation letter.
3. **If this is to schedule a date for surgery (care plan);** Within a week after completing the screener you will receive a call to schedule a Surgery Care Plan with a TGNB Surgery Doula. Your Surgery Care Plan is needed for support letters and requests for peri-operative services or support.
4. **Surgery Education** is available if you need more information about the procedure to learn the risks and benefits of your surgery.
5. **Discuss the medical details of your surgery** and your request for a letter with your Callen-Lorde Primary Care Provider.
6. **Meet with a therapist and/or psychiatrist.** After the Care Plan is complete, you will receive an appointment with the behavioral health provider(s) you will need for your surgery.

What happens at each appointment?

- **Gender Affirming Peri-operative Services (GAPS) screener:** A Medical Provider will help you start the process of coordinating surgery and getting your letters.
 - o Make sure you know the name of your surgeon, your desired procedure, and your current health insurance information.
 - o You will receive information about options for patient education
- **Surgery Care Plan:** The GAPS team will discuss what you learned during your consultation, how you are preparing for recovery, and who your caregiver(s) will be. We will also check in with you about insurance benefits and community resource referrals.
- **PCP appointment:** You will discuss your desired procedure with your PCP and go over any relevant health information before your consultation. Before support letters are written, providers will review follow up items from surgery care plans and order your labs that will need to be signed at your pre-op visit (a few weeks before surgery).
- **Behavioral Health (Therapist/Psychiatrist) Appointment:** The Behavioral Health Provider you meet with will ask you questions about your desired surgery and your care plan - including your caregiver(s), managing stress around surgery, and more.
- **Surgery or Medical Clearance & Labs:** Blood and urine tests requested from surgeons are drawn and reviewed by your Callen-Lorde medical provider. Documentation about your physical health is signed for your surgeon.
- **Post-op check in:** The GAPS team will call about one-week after discharge to check in on your recovery.

You can schedule a virtual appointment to do this by calling our office at 212-271-7200 and confirming the surgery you are coordinating, the surgeon you'll be seeing and the insurance coverage you'll be using.

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How long will it take for me to get my letters?

This can depend on a lot of things.

Generally, it takes about 4-6 weeks from the first request for letters until they are sent to your surgeon's office. For this reason, we recommend requesting your surgery letters at least 3 months before your surgery date. There may be unexpected delays and we do not want your plans to be altered.

What if I feel like it's been taking too long for me to get my surgery letters?

We know sometimes it can feel this way! The process of navigating gender affirming surgery requires a lot of patience. We are doing everything we can to get your letters to you as quickly as possible.

- If you have already had appointments for letters check the "Letters" section in your MyChart App.
- If it has been 2 weeks without hearing from us, or to be sure you're scheduled with a Surgery Doula or provider, please contact our Patient Care Associates on 212-271-7200.
- Requests for letters that are needed within 4 weeks are handled on a case-by-case basis. We understand that surgery dates are flexible and may change due to cancellations or changes in surgeon's schedule, but unfortunately, we cannot accommodate these requests.

Surgeries that are booked within a month of your letter request cannot be fulfilled.

What if I miss my appointment?

If you miss an appointment, call back as soon as you can to reschedule. We will offer you the soonest available appointment, but you will not be able to skip the line.

TIP: Make sure you empty your voicemail box so that we can leave a message. Set an alarm or reminder for your appointments. And don't forget to add these appointments to your calendar! These tips can help you remember these important meetings with your providers.

Making the Request: Consult or Surgery Date?

There are two types of letters we provide at Callen-Lorde - Consultation Letters and Support Letters.

- Consultation Letters will be written to help you secure a date for a consultation. This is a note for your surgeon to let them know that we support your surgery planning and education.
- Support Letters will be written after your consultation, in order to confirm your medical health and to get insurance approval for your procedure.

Once all your letters are complete, they will be sent as you advised in your screener and care plan for surgery. You may also download them from MyChart.

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Resources

- TransAtlas has a map of providers, lists of surgeons for several gender affirming procedures, and transition resources to help planning for surgery.
- Callen-Lorde Case Managers can help you find and utilize TransAtlas.
- Callen-Lorde Facilitated Enrollment Navigators can help folks look up and sign up for insurance plans that can help pay for gender affirming care.
- Callen-Lorde Surgery Doulas can provide surgery education to help you coordinate surgery and set realistic expectations for consultation, surgery, and recovery.

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A digital resource map for people of **Transgender, Non-binary** and/or **Intersex** experience living in New York City, brought to you by Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

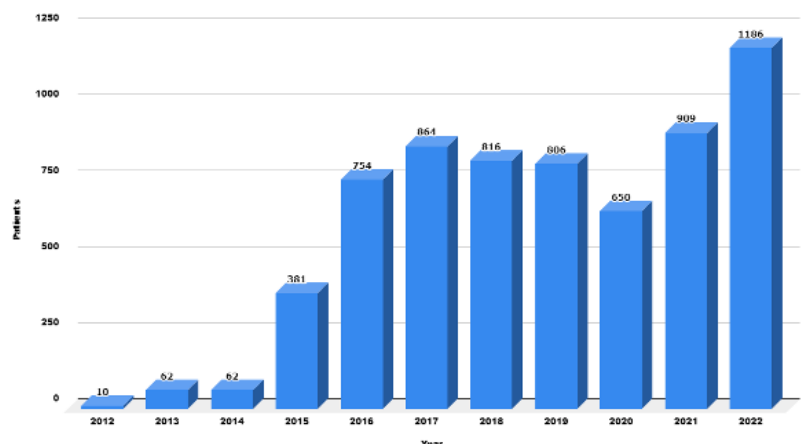
TransAtlas.Callen-Lorde.org

Increased Demand

In 2022, almost 1/3 of Callen-Lorde's patients were TGNB identified, and more than 1,100 patients asked for surgery letters. This number continues to grow, and many patients are requesting letters for multiple procedures. When NYC hospitals reopened in June 2020, we saw a 216% increase in letter requests – we are still seeing an increase every year!

As the number of Callen-Lorde patients in need of surgery letters and support continues to grow, we're changing our process to protect patient's health and safety. We are spending a little more time getting to know each patient to understand their needs and to ensure they have the safest and most affirming experience possible.

Number of patients seeking letters each year



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Appointment Expectations and Information

Gender Affirming Perioperative Support (GAPS) Screeners are available for patients to complete with a Callen-Lorde Medical Provider. Screeners document the request for resources, documentation and/or appointments for gender affirming perioperative care and support. You can schedule a virtual appointment to do this by calling our office at 212-271-7200 and confirming the surgery you are coordinating, the surgeon you'll be seeing and the insurance coverage you'll be using.

1. TGNB Perioperative Screeners confirm:

- Patient identification and contact information
- Request for resources, documentation and/or appointments
- Preferences for sending/receiving documentation about surgery.

Expectations for GAPS screener sessions:

- It is a virtual visit appointment
- May last 15 minutes
- Availability within 2 days

Patient education sessions are offered to all patients coordinating and requesting documentation or resources for gender affirming surgery. The sessions discuss specific procedures, preparation for surgery and recovery, and community resource referrals. Patients may also be scheduled for these appointments to discuss insurance needs and questions about selecting a surgeon or preparing for a consultation.

You can schedule a patient education appointment with a TGNB Surgery Doula by calling our office at 212-271-7200 and letting us know what you would like to discuss with a surgery doula.

Expectations for patient education sessions:

- It is a telephone appointment.
- May last 30 min - 1 hour.
- Covers general information about procedures (not surgeon specific)

Consultation letters are available for patients asked to provide letters to consult a surgeon. If your surgeon does not ask for letters to be provided at the time of consultation, you can skip this step and schedule a care plan for the day after your consultation.

You will be scheduled for consultation letters after completing a TGNB Perioperative Screener with a Callen-Lorde medical provider. Consultation letter appointments are requested during the Gender Affirming Peri-operative Services screener. You will be called within a week to schedule the appointments for consultation letters.

2. Consultation letters are provided to confirm:

- Gender dysphoria diagnosis/treatment
- Established relationship with providers.
- The patient is ready to gain information and/or procedure plan.

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Appointment Expectations and Information (continued)

A care plan for surgery is available for patients that have had a consultation with their selected surgeon and are looking to schedule appointments with medical or mental health providers for letters of support.

You will be scheduled for a care plan after completing a GAPS Screener with a Callen-Lorde medical provider or a patient education session with a GAPS Surgery Doula. Care plan appointments requested during the Gender Affirming Peri-operative Services screener are scheduled with a call back from our Patient Care Associates. Care plans can also be scheduled at the end of a patient education session with a GAPS Surgery Doula.

3. Care Plan for Surgery is conducted so that:

- We are safe, empowered, and prepared for surgery and recovery.
- Callen-Lorde providers can have the most up to date information in one place from the #1 source in this process, the patient.
- Care Providers can keep track of what appointments, requirements and documentation is needed for surgery.
- Letters are completed with the information that we need for surgeons and insurance to move forward.

Expectations for surgery care plan sessions:

- It is a telephone appointment.
- May last 30 min – 1 hour.

The Callen-Lorde Gender Affirming Perioperative Support team recommends all patients requesting gender affirming surgery complete a surgery care plan before receiving support letters. Care Plans are required prior to receiving support letters from behavioral health providers.

Appointments for letters with medical and behavioral health providers are available for patients that have completed a care plan for surgery and are asked to provide medical and/or mental health letters of support to schedule surgery. Consultation letters and letters of support for in-office procedures are provided without a care plan for surgery.

You will be scheduled for support letters for surgical procedures at the end of a surgery care plan with a GAPS Surgery Doula. Support letter appointments for in-office procedures (hair grafting, hair removal, fillers, medical tattooing, and vocal therapy) are requested during the GAPS Screener, then you'll be called within a week to schedule the appointments for letters.

4. Appointments for letters

- Are required for documents (letters, clearance, etc.) to be completed.
- Are scheduled after a consultation and/or in-office procedure screeners are completed.
- Are scheduled after a care plan for support letters is completed.

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Appointment Expectations and Information (continued)

Medical clearance appointments for medical clearance, labs, and final documentation to be signed by medical providers are available to be scheduled with paneled medical providers as soon as patients have a scheduled surgery date.

5. Medical Clearance Appointment

- Blood work and labs needed (ordered in Virtual Visit 1 week before results signed)
- Documentation and attestations signed.
- Physical exam, EKG as indicated.

If you have a surgery date at the time of your care plan, a GAPS Surgery Doula will schedule you for a medical clearance appointment 2-4 weeks before your surgery date. You may also schedule a medical clearance appointment with your Callen-Lorde medical provider as soon as you do get scheduled for surgery. We recommend scheduling a virtual appointment to place the orders for your imaging, blood and/or urine tests 1 week before an in-office appointment to have physical exams and sign documents.


Post-op check in telephone calls is available for patients that have scheduled surgery dates and would like to have a member of the GAPS Surgery Doula team call about one week after surgery to check in on needs and experiences.


6. post-op check in

- 15-minute phone call
- Check in on needs for follow up appointments and care.
- Check in on healing progress.
- Check in on follow up needs to communicate to providers.
- Check in on emotional needs and support if needed.

If you have a surgery date at the time of your care plan, a GAPS Surgery Doula will schedule you for a post-op check-in call 1 week after your surgery or discharge date. You may also schedule a post-op check-in call with your Callen-Lorde medical provider or a GAPS Surgery Doula as soon as you do get scheduled for surgery.

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A digital resource map for people of **Transgender, Non-binary** and/or **Intersex** experience living in New York City, brought to you by Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

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