

The Transition Process

Ballpark cost of transitioning in the U.S. for trans women:

Just psychotherapy, hormones, and electrolysis: Low \$4,500, average \$18,600, top \$55,900
Full transition, including top and bottom surgery, facial surgery, and miscellaneous expenses: Average \$47,000, top \$232,000

Some costs of transitioning in the U.S. for trans men:

"Top" surgery (bilateral mastectomy): \$6,000
"Bottom" surgery: \$5,000–\$15,000

Transition costs are not typically covered by insurance.
Some trans people save money by having surgery performed in Thailand or India.

Standards of Care

Most people transition following the Standards of Care (SOCs), guidelines set forth by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. The SOC's position psychologists and physicians as gatekeepers to medical and surgical reassignment. This conservative approach slows the process so clients don't make life-altering changes too quickly. It also ensures that clients are mentally and physically healthy enough to handle the changes. The SOC's include:

1. Psychotherapy before and throughout the entire transition process.
2. If the client receives a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, they may begin their "real-life test," a one- or two-year period during which they must live full-time in their identified gender. Today, most people take hormones during this period.
3. If this real-life test is successful, the client is eligible for sex reassignment surgery (which requires a recommendation from a second mental health professional).

Options for Trans Women

- Estrogen and progesterone to soften the skin, stimulate breast growth, redistribute muscle/body fat for a more feminine appearance, and reduce some body hair
- Electrolysis to end unwanted hair growth
- "Top" surgery to augment breasts with implants
- Orchiectomy to remove the testicles
- Vaginoplasty, which turns the penis inside out and moves nerve endings around to create a functional and realistic-looking vagina
- Labiaplasty to create labia and the clitoral hood
- Facial reconstruction surgery to create a more feminine appearance
- Hairline correction/hair transplant surgery for more feminine hair
- Tracheal shave to reduce the Adam's apple

Options for Trans Men

- Testosterone to lower the voice, stimulate facial and body hair growth, redistribute muscles and body fat for a more masculine appearance, and end the menstrual cycle
- "Top" surgery to remove breasts
- Hysterectomy/oophorectomy to remove the uterus and ovaries
- Metoidioplasty/scrotoplasty to release the clitoris (which is enlarged by T) and create a scrotum
- Phalloplasty to construct a penis from skin grafts and extend the urethra
- Facial reconstruction surgery to create a more masculine appearance

Of course, surgical procedures to change one's genitals is an interesting topic. But consider that you don't need to know what procedures someone has had or not had. Referring to a person as "pre-op" or post-op" reduces them to the state of their genitals and implies that surgery is a necessary part of a transition, which is not the case. **Whether or not someone has had surgery should never make a difference in how they are treated.**

definition:

transition: The period of time during which a trans person changes from their old gender role to their new one. The transition is complete once they have taken all the medical steps and made the lifestyle adjustments they intended.

Documentation

For a trans person, showing ID that doesn't match their gender expression can trigger mistreatment and police violence. Correct documentation is essential for protecting their basic rights, including the ability to travel, work, and use banking services. But it's not a simple matter to change all the documentation.

Obtaining a court-ordered change of legal name and gender is the crucial first step. In New Mexico, this costs \$150 (waived for low-income people) and takes 4–5 weeks. Tribal authorities typically deny such requests.

The next step is changing the name and gender designation on the Social Security account. Until 2011, the Social Security Administration issued "no match" letters to employers when its record of a person's gender did not match the gender the company reported. This policy unwittingly outed trans employees, raised suspicions of identity theft, and usually resulted in firing.

In most states, changing the gender marker on a birth certificate requires a notarized letter from the surgeon as proof of "surgical treatment." Some states require this surgery to be "irreversible." However, a growing number of states are amending this language to "appropriate clinical treatment." Next, it's a good idea to have the old birth certificate sealed, which may require a court appearance and additional expense.

Other documents that need updating include the driver's license, passport (which also requires proof of "appropriate clinical treatment"), bank accounts and records, credit cards, paychecks, work IDs, leases, medical records, and academic transcripts.

*National Center for Transgender Equality and The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "Injustice at Every Turn," 2011.

41% of trans people live without any ID that matches their gender identity.

Only 21% of trans people have all their identification updated.

Of those who presented ID (in the ordinary course of life) that did not match their gender identity, 40% were harassed, 3% were attacked or assaulted, and 15% were asked to leave.*