

## Gender Dysphoria & Mental Health

**Gender dysphoria** is defined by the DSM-V as the following: a marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and primary and/or secondary sex characteristics... including the strong desire to be rid of natal sex characteristics and/or desire for the sex characteristics of another gender.

There must be a history of at least **6 months** of gender dysphoria for gender affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) to be indicated clinically.

This means your provider will ask you about your gender identity and expression, *and* what changes you want and expect to happen during your transition, to confirm that GAHT is the best step for you.

Additionally, per the international trans health care guidelines set by WPATH, any mental health conditions must be “reasonably well controlled” before initiation of GAHT. For example, if you have depression, anxiety, or another mental health condition, it must be well managed with appropriate, consistent supports. **Mental health can fluctuate even more** once hormones are initiated, and your safety is your provider's primary consideration.

While most providers do not require letters from mental health professionals to initiate hormones, they are still required for gender affirming surgeries. Cultivating a relationship with a therapist earlier in your transition may help you reach your goals and navigate these changes in the long term.



**WANT TO TALK TO  
SOMEONE BUT DON'T KNOW  
WHERE TO START?**

**UVM Counseling  
& Psychiatry  
Services (CAPS)**

CAPS offers drop-in visits and scheduled appointments for students, and they can help you find other local resources as well.

### References:

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
- Coleman et al. (2022). Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 23:sup1, S1-S259, DOI: 10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644