

To be posted / published!

## TRANS HEALTH CARE IN PRISONS

The first step in navigating prison health care systems to get treatment as a transgender person is to request a mental health evaluation, and more specifically, a diagnosis for Gender Dysphoria (GD). In this process, you may run into roadblocks and obstacles, such as an unsympathetic psychologist or psychiatrist. Just be persistent and continue to request follow-up care until you see different doctors.

You must insist that you are not comfortable with your sex assigned at birth, and wish to change your gender. Once you get a GD diagnosis, this will in most states today qualify you for transition-related medical care such as hormone therapy and other things.

If you hit a brick wall, which is not overcome by informal requests, you may need to pursue the inmate appeal system and exhaust administrative remedies before contemplating filing a Federal civil rights lawsuit.

I have been incarcerated for ~~30~~ years and did not have the education or determination to seek transgender care until about 14 years ago in 2003. Once I obtained a GD diagnosis, it took 4 more years to eventually convince a physician to provide hormone therapy in 2007. At that time I came out publicly as a transwoman and underwent a full gender transition. I'm continuing to pursue sex-reassignment surgery (SRS), but only recently in 2016 did the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) adopt guidelines for SRS evaluations, as a result of legal settlement in the case of Shiloh Quine. SRS is still routinely denied in spite of the policy change.

In 2012, the policy allowing bras to be issued to transwoman in men's facilities in California was implemented. It took a couple more years to gain compliance with that policy in most prisons state-wide.

Now, just a few weeks ago in 2017, all of us transwomen at Salinas Valley State Prison were called out of our housing units and issued all allowable laundry items that women prisoners are issued, that includes panties, blouses, slacks, and mumus!

So, my advice to all trans inmates to be consistent and persistent in requesting basic rights to medical and mental health care. Keep your composure and be dignified in your interactions with staff, in spite of adversity or hostility on their part. Don't let them provoke you into a war of words or physical confrontation which you are sure to lose.



My advice is to be consistent and persistent. This is a struggle we are winning every day. If you do not get the health care you need, file a grievance. If you do not get reasonable accommodation such as safe housing or gender appropriate clothing, file a grievance.

It always helps to contact an outside prisoner support group such as Black & Pink or TGI Justice Project. You can find their addresses in any prisoner resource guide – I wish you best of luck!

Jennifer ~~Rose~~ E-23852,

Salinas Valley State Prison, P.O. Box 1050, Soledad, CA 93960

[Babygirlgann.noblogs.org](http://Babygirlgann.noblogs.org)

[Betweenthebars.org/blogs/490/](http://Betweenthebars.org/blogs/490/)



### Subscribe to *Prison Health News!*

It's free and comes out 4 times a year. We cover health issues like hepatitis C, HIV, diabetes, asthma, depression, PTSD, women's health, LGBT health, exercise and nutrition. A lot of our articles are written by people in prison, about how they have advocated for themselves to get the health care they need. Prison Health News aims to break down the walls with the radical power of information.

If you'd like to get Prison Health News, send your name, number and address to:

**Prison Health News**  
**c/o Philadelphia FIGHT**  
**1233 Locust Street, 5th Floor**  
**Philadelphia PA 19107**

