

# Gender-Affirming Program with Speech (GAPS)

A national voice and communication program for transgender Veterans

## What is gender-affirming voice care?

The way we communicate helps to define who we are. For many, a desired voice and communication style is key to expressing their gender identity.

In GAPS, specialty-trained Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP) provide gender-affirming voice and communication services that address voice, speech, language, and non-verbal communication. Research has shown that skills learned with an SLP can result in increased satisfaction with voice and communication while reducing the risk of developing vocal strain.

## Are you interested in gender-affirming voice therapy?

- Ask your VA health care provider to submit a request for a gender-affirming visit with a speech-language pathologist
- Meet with a speech-language pathologist with knowledge in gender-affirming voice and communication treatment
- Questions?  
Email us at [VHALGBTQ+Health@va.gov](mailto:VHALGBTQ+Health@va.gov) or [VACOVHAASPS@va.gov](mailto:VACOVHAASPS@va.gov)

## How do I participate in the sessions?

Sessions are offered through VA Video Connect, which will allow you to connect with your speech-language pathologist over live video from a computer, tablet, or smartphone.



## What happens during a session?

During a speech pathology session, you will explore a variety of voice and communication styles to support you in achieving your authentic and affirming voice. Depending on your goals, the SLP will guide you through the practice of various techniques:

- Voice care and breathing techniques
- Vocal loudness and power
- Variations in pitch, resonance, and melody
- Non-speech voice behaviors (laughing, coughing, throat clearing, sneezing)
- Non-verbal communication (facial expression and gestures)
- Understanding how speech and language influences communication including word choice or sentence structure

## What are the expectations for participating in gender-affirming voice care?

- Attend 4 - 8 individual sessions with a speech-language pathologist
- Find time to practice what you have learned outside of the session. Making changes to the way we use our voice for communication takes practice
- Group sessions are available to maintain your voice and communication style after individual sessions are complete

## What are the benefits of participating in gender-affirming voice care?

- Improved self-perception of voice
- Reduced number of times someone is misgendered
- Feeling more comfortable expressing yourself

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