

I first contacted Heart and Soul on Facebook after finding them in an internet search. I needed someone licensed in New York who was either a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, a Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, or a psychologist or psychiatrist -- not a licensed mental health counselor, LMSW, or any other kind of mental health professional -- very specifically to fulfill state Medicaid regulatory requirements for a second, WPATH-type letter referring me for transgender surgeries. They also needed to be in-network with my Managed Care Plan, which they are.

They found a spot in their schedule for me to see someone qualified under the regulations during my 3-day trip to and from New York City to consult surgeons. I saw Tina Calabrese, LCSW, a WPATH member with years of experience in writing these types of letters. While she had particular questions to ask me, she let me go off on relevant tangents and tell my story. She was also receptive to me telling her specific phrases & elements that the state regulations required and strong suggestions for wording & aspects to include recommended by a case worker at Callen Lorde experienced in getting Medicaid to cover facial feminization surgery. She made me feel comfortable, as well as confident that her referral letter would help me to get surgery covered.

I needed only the one appointment to obtain my letter, which was promptly written, and emailed to me as well as faxed to my surgeons, within a couple of days. She was also amenable to forwarding the letter to future surgeons when I seek second opinions. The letter covered all the necessary bases to argue facial feminization, breast augmentation, and genital corrective surgeries are all medically necessary in my case.

The staff was friendly and helpful, and even microwaved my leftovers from the night before so I could enjoy a hot meal before my several-hundred-mile drive back home. I can't recommend Heart and Soul strongly enough. I only needed them for a second, evaluative, WPATH letter, but if someone needed them for their first letter from an ongoing therapist, or otherwise needed counseling there for LGBTQI issues, I wouldn't hesitate to suggest them.