

Sample Referral Letter for Hormone Therapy

This letter is to serve as a record of Lia X's eligibility for hormone therapy on the basis of her transgender identity and readiness to begin a medical gender transition. Lia identifies as a transgender woman and was assigned a male sex at birth. Lia has been working with me as a psychotherapy client since [date]. She has attended seven individual therapy sessions and one family session with her mother for a total of eight sessions.

Lia's legal name is Anthony X, but she plans to change her name legally in the near future. In most settings, she is introducing herself as Lia rather than Anthony and has asked those who know about her gender identity to refer to her as Lia and to use female pronouns. Lia reports that she began presenting as a woman since July 2013 but has been presenting femininely since she was a toddler. She states that she can remember being a child around the age of 4, indicating to her aunt and uncle "I'm a girl" and having her uncle correct her but having her aunt affirm her gender nonconforming behavior. She indicates that she has expressed her gender in a feminine manner since "I could walk and talk." She states that she played with "girl toys" and would wear pink at any moment throughout her childhood. The Recalled Childhood Gender Identity/Gender Role Questionnaire asks 23 questions to assess childhood nonconformity. Lia indicates that her behaviors and feelings as a child were "always feminine" across all 23 questions.

Lia reported that she came out as gay when she was in seventh grade, which she stated did not "come as a surprise" to many, since she had been expressing herself femininely in most settings. At the age of 17, she came out as a transgender woman to her mother in July 2013 and has subsequently come out to her other family members and friends (with mixed positive and negative reactions). She indicates that she has been receiving accommodations at the university to assist her with her gender transition. For example, she describes living in housing that will accommodate her request for a single-stall restroom and that her professors have changed her name on their rosters to reflect the name she currently uses. Lia reports that she has a strong sense of social support related to her transition. On the Multidimensional Scale of Social Support, she indicated that she has "strong social support" (e.g., 77 out of 84) from family and friends. Although Lia reports high levels of social support currently, she describes being bullied in middle school, which led to self-harm behaviors and a suicide attempt at the age of 14. Lia denies any current self-harm or suicidal ideation.

Related to Lia's mental health, she endorsed a higher than average level of anxiety at the time this letter is being written (e.g., a score of 31 on the Burns Anxiety Inventory, which is the cutoff for severe anxiety). Although she mostly endorsed experiencing anxiety symptoms "somewhat" (sudden panic spells, difficulty concentrating, pressure in her chest, etc.), there were several symptoms related to her gender identity, which she reported to experience a "moderate" amount (feeling detached from her body, concerns about looking foolish, and fears of criticism or disapproval). Lia also endorsed a higher than average level of depression. Lia scored 22 on the Center for Epidemiological Studies for Depression scale; the cutoff score for clinical depression is 16. It should be noted that she endorsed items such as "I felt I was just as good as other people" and "I felt hopeful about the future." Lia describes a substantial amount of distress that is derived from feeling incongruence with her body. She reports strong feelings of disgust when

she looks at herself in the mirror and tries to avoid seeing herself naked. She indicates that she feels tearful every day when her facial hair becomes apparent.

Lia presents with symptoms that are consistent with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. Although she meets criteria for social anxiety disorder and persistent mood disorder, it is my clinical opinion that these are symptoms related to dysphoria. Based on her self-report in therapy, her depressive and anxiety symptoms appear to be related to her feeling “in between” genders at the moment and wanting to move her transition forward. Lia reports an extensive family history of bipolar disorder; however, she does not present with any symptoms that are congruent with bipolar disorder or other psychiatric diagnoses.

Lia and I have discussed the possibility of hormone therapy, and she appears well versed in her knowledge of the possible side effects and what she will gain from using hormones. When asked about what she is expecting from taking hormones, she reports that she is excited to see physical changes (breast growth, skin texture, etc.). She also indicates that she believes that the hormones will greatly improve her mental health and decrease some of the incongruence that she experiences related to her gender.

In sum, Lia X (legal name: Anthony X) is an 18-year-old transgender woman who meets the criteria for gender dysphoria. She has engaged in psychotherapy with me since July 2013 and continues to engage in therapy sessions in pursuit of hormone therapy and support throughout her transition process. There is no evidence of impaired judgment. In addition, I believe that Lia’s psychopathology related to anxiety and depression will dissipate as she engages in hormone therapy. I certify Lia to be a fit candidate for hormone therapy and assert that these treatments are medically necessary to improve her well-being. Pursuant to the enclosed signed release, feel free to contact me at [include phone number and e-mail] if there are any further questions regarding this individual.

Budge, S. L. (2015). Psychotherapists as gatekeepers: an evidence-based case study highlighting the role and process of letter writing for transgender clients. *Psychotherapy*, 52, 287-297. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000034>