

# A PASSPORT GUIDE FOR TRANS\* STUDENTS ABROAD

Studying abroad can open up your world in ways you may never have thought possible. For students who identify as trans\*, studying abroad may simply require a bit of planning and a few questions as you choose a program, but the BW Study Abroad Center is here to help. Under the 2010 State Department policy, a trans\* individual can obtain a passport reflecting their current gender by submitting a certification from a physician confirming that they have had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition. Under the 2010 policy, you can obtain a full ten-year passport with an updated gender if you have had clinical treatment determined by your doctor to be appropriate in your case to facilitate gender transition. You can obtain a limited validity two-year passport when you are in the process of getting appropriate clinical treatment.

**\*\*For additional resources as an LGBTQ+ student, please see BW's Guide for LGBTQ+ Students Abroad.**

## CLINICAL TREATMENT

### WHAT IS CLINICAL TREATMENT?

The 2010 policy recognizes that people's medical needs vary, and that treatment options must be decided by health care professionals on an individual basis. You are entitled to a passport reflecting your current gender if you have had the clinical treatment determined by your health care providers to be appropriate, in your individual case, to facilitate gender transition. No specific treatment is required, and details of your treatment do not need to be provided. In fact, it's encouraged for you and your doctor to only state in the letter that you have had the clinical treatment determined by your health care providers to be appropriate. Details about surgery, hormone treatment, or other treatments are unnecessary and not helpful.

### SUPPORTING MEDICAL INFORMATION

Other than the required certification from your physician, there is no need to submit any additional details or documentation regarding your medical history or treatment. Your doctor does not need to certify that you have undergone any specific treatment or procedure. We recommend, for your privacy, and to keep the process simple, that they not do so.



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# PHYSICIAN CERTIFICATION

## WHEN IS A CERTIFICATION REQUIRED?

Under the 2010 policy, a physician certification is required if the documents you submit with your application, which may include a prior passport, driver's license, birth certificate, or other documents, do not all reflect the correct gender. If all the documents you submit with your application reflect the correct gender, you do not need to submit a physician certification.

## DOCUMENTATION LETTER

You will need a letter from a licensed physician with whom you have a doctor-patient relationship and who is familiar with your transition-related treatment. This may be any physician who is familiar with your treatment, including a primary care physician or specialist. All certifications must be on the physician's office letterhead and include all of the information seen here, including both the physician's license or certificate number and DEA registration number. You should ask your physician to use this letter and not give additional personal health information that is not included here.

# CERTIFICATION LETTER TEMPLATE

The State Department has provided the following model letter for physician certifications:

Licensed Physician's Letterhead  
(Physician's Address and Telephone Number)

I, (physician's full name), (physician's medical license or certificate number), (issuing U.S. State/Foreign Country of medical license/certificate), am the physician of (name of patient), with whom I have a doctor/patient relationship and whom I have treated (or with whom I have a doctor/patient relationship and whose medical history I have reviewed and evaluated).

(Name of patient) has had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition to the new gender (specify new gender male or female).

Or

(Name of patient) is in the process of transition (specify new gender male or female).

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the forgoing is true and correct.

Signature

Typed Name

Date

# APPLYING FOR A PASSPORT

## OBTAINING A PASSPORT IN PERSON

To apply to obtain a passport in person, you can find guidelines at the link below:

[www.travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/apply-renew-passport/apply-in-person.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/apply-renew-passport/apply-in-person.html)

Also bring the following as needed:

- If one or more of the submitted documents does not reflect your current gender, a physician certification, as described above;
- Legal documentation of name change, if needed; and
- Current applicable fees, available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/fees.html>.

Take these documents and fees in person to any passport acceptance facility. These include courthouses, post offices, some public libraries and certain county and municipal offices. Additionally, there are thirteen regional passport agencies and one Gateway City Agency, which serves those who need expedited service. To find the acceptance facility closest to you, visit the State Department's website, at <http://iafdb.travel.state.gov> or call the National Passport Information Center.

## RENEWAL THROUGH MAIL

If you are requesting gender change, you must use form DS-11 and apply in person, even if you would otherwise be eligible to renew by mail. This is a new requirement since 2010. By contrast, if you are only applying for a change of name, or do not need to change any information, you may be eligible to renew by mail using Form DS-82. Consult the State Department's website for details.

## CHANGING A 2-YEAR PASSPORT TO A 10-YEAR PASSPORT

If you have a limited validity passport that has not yet expired, you should submit the following:

1. A completed form DS-5504, Application for a U.S. Passport (Name Change, Data Correction and Limited Passport Book Replacement);
2. A passport photo that resembles your current appearance; and
3. A physician certification, as described above, stating that you have had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition.

Submit these documents to the address specified on the form. Unless you request expedited service, no new fee is required.

## CHANGING YOUR NAME

State Department policies concerning name changes have not changed. You must submit form DS-5504, Application for a U.S. Passport (Name Change, Data Correction and Limited Passport Book Replacement), along with a court order or marriage certificate reflecting the name change, or records documenting consistent use of your current name over a five-year period. Consult the State Department's website for more details.

# KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS

## IF YOU RUN INTO PROBLEMS...

The 2010 policy specifically instructs passport specialists to treat transgender applicants with respect, including using appropriate pronouns, and to not ask unrelated questions. However if you encounter improper requests for information, unprofessional behavior, or other difficulties obtaining a passport, contact your Regional Passport Office, the National Center for Transgender Equality, or your U.S. Senator's Office.

If you encounter discrimination, harassment or other serious difficulties relating to being transgender while traveling abroad, contact the closest U.S. Consulate or Embassy immediately.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

US State Department Foreign Affairs Manual, 7 FAM 300 Appendix M: Gender Change  
(<https://fam.state.gov/FAM/o8FAM/o8FAMo40303.html>)

- US State Department Passport Home  
([www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html))

- US State Department, Change Your Name in Your Passport  
(<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>)

- National Center for Transgender Equality  
([www.transequality.org/](http://www.transequality.org/))

- US State Department, Frequently Asked Questions: Passports and Citizenship Documents  
(<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/passport-help/faqs.html>)

- National Passport Information Center Phone Line  
(1-877-487-2778)

Adapted from the National Center for Transgender Equality &  
the United States Department of State



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