

## **Recreational Therapy: Makes Life Worth Living**

### **Frequently Asked Questions about Recreational Therapy**

#### **How does Recreational Therapy differ from other therapies?**

Recreational Therapy (RT) embraces a definition of "health" which includes not only the absence of "illness," but extends to enhancement of physical, cognitive, emotional, social and leisure development so individuals may participate fully and independently in chosen life pursuits. The unique feature of RT that makes it different from other therapies is the use of recreational modalities in the designed intervention strategies. RT is extremely individualized to each person by his or her past, present and future interests and lifestyle. The recreational therapist has a unique perspective regarding the social, cognitive, physical, and leisure needs of the person. Incorporating client's interests, and the client's family and/or community makes the therapy process meaningful and relevant. Recreational therapists weave the concept of healthy living into treatment to ensure not only improved functioning, but also to enhance independence and successful involvement in all aspects of life.

#### **How does Recreational Therapy differ from "Activities"?**

Recreational Therapists (a CTRS) may work as an Activity Director or a Life Enhancement Coordinator in long-term care. However, there is a difference in qualifications for activity professionals and a CTRS. A CTRS has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in RT, TR from an accredited university, specific coursework in RT, a 560-hour internship, and a National Certification exam.

#### **Who provides Recreational Therapy?**

Recreational therapy is provided by qualified professionals know as Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS). Requirements to be become a CTRS include a Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited university, a formal clinical internship and passing a national competency exam. The National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) oversees the credentialing process. Several states also require recreational therapists to be licensed within their states.

### **Where do Recreational Therapists work?**

Recreational therapy is provided in a variety of settings where the therapeutic process is used. This process involves assessment of an individual's needs and functioning, planning of interventions, implementation of services, evaluation of interventions and client progress and documentation (APIED) of services provided.

Recreational therapists practice in settings such as inpatient and outpatient physical rehabilitation, inpatient and outpatient mental health, skilled nursing facilities and assisted living, adult day programs, adapted sports programs, acute care hospitals, pediatric hospitals and programs and school systems to name a few places.

### **Who benefits from Recreational Therapy?**

Research indicates that recreational therapy provides a variety of positive health outcomes for individuals of all ages with physical disabilities, older adults, individuals with psychiatric disorders, pediatric patients, youth at risk and people with developmental disabilities or brain injuries.

### **How is recreational therapy beneficial?**

- Providing active, outcome focused care which achieves results
- Enabling the generalization of skill developed in treatment to their home and community environments
- Reducing the effects of primary and secondary disabilities
- Providing treatment through cost effective means such as in small and large group settings
- Serving as a cost-effective means to enhance or replace other more costly services
- Addressing the whole person with the focus on enhancing independent functioning within physical, social, cognitive, and emotional domains
- Training individuals to identify and utilize community resources that enable independent functioning
- Focusing on skills that carry over to everyday life and can make a difference in a person's quality of life
- Providing a diversity of interventions which are cost effective, add value and have significant durability across an individual's lifespan.

## Would you or someone you care about would benefit from recreational therapy?

Use this checklist:

Do you or someone you care about:

- recently retired and am seeking new avenues for purpose and joy in life.
- experiences social isolation and/or loneliness.
- needs better ways to manage stress.
- wants to explore new leisure or recreational interests.
- wants to engage in the community.
- need modifications to continue my preferred leisure and recreational opportunities.
- wants to learn about ways to manage pain (without more medications).
- wants to learn about ways to support better mental health.
- lives with the impact of a stroke, brain injury, or other neurological condition.
- has had multiple falls or is worried about falls.
- has Alzheimer's disease or related dementia.
- is expressing distress reactions or lack of hope.
- has Parkinson's disease.
- has a developmental disability.
- is on the autism spectrum.

### Additional Resource:

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) is the premier credentialing organization for the profession of Therapeutic Recreation. <https://www.nctrc.org/>

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