



## RECREATION THERAPY SERVICE FACT SHEET

Recreation Therapy provides services to restore, remediate, and/or rehabilitate functional capabilities for Veterans with injuries, chronic illnesses, and disabling conditions. Recreation Therapy services embraces a philosophy of health promotion and disease prevention facilitated by qualified clinicians designed to support each Veteran’s self-directed, self-determined, and fully independent participation in their chosen life pursuits. Recreation Therapy services include assessment and treatment for physical, cognitive, emotional, psychosocial, and leisure deficits. Services are provided based upon applying the best available research evidence, using expert clinical judgment in consideration with the Veteran’s individual goals, preferences, and values.

### RECREATION THERAPY

#### MISSION

The Mission of the Recreation Therapy Service, a direct-care interdisciplinary service, is to improve and enrich bio-psycho-social functioning through active therapy and/or meaningful therapeutic activities to maintain or improve functional independence and life quality. The intended outcome of the state of art evidence-based clinical interventions is independence in life activities based upon patient/residents needs and goals.

#### RECREATION THERAPY VISION

To provide therapy based patient-centered service that integrates function, quality, and meaning to one's life.



### POPULATION SERVED

Recreation therapists practice across the continuum of care, providing services in inpatient settings, outpatient clinics, CBOC’s, and tele-rehabilitation.

- Recreation Therapists serve as key members of numerous interdisciplinary treatment teams;
- Recreation Therapists construct appropriate and evidence-based recreation therapy interventions for treating patients with complex medical or mental health issues such as Polytrauma, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Spinal Cord Injury (SCI); Substance Use Disorder/ Addictions; Serious Mental Illness (SMI); and Hospice/Palliative Care;
- Recreation Therapists design individualized treatment interventions to reduce stress, anxiety and maladaptive behaviors, recover basic motor functioning and reasoning abilities, build confidence, and

develop compensatory strategies to master critical life skills necessary for community reengagement.



### RECREATION THERAPY FACTS

The VA is the largest employer of recreation therapists in the United States, employing over 900 recreation therapists.

In 2018, Recreation Therapy treated over 130,285 unique patients.

### THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

Recreation therapists use their discipline specific evidenced based treatment modalities to address therapeutic or palliative care



needs. Interventions are individualized to meet each Veteran served goals, preferences, and needs. Interventions are holistic and incorporate Veteran’s function, interests, family, community, and lifestyle. Recreation therapists may co-treat or add their treatment modality to accomplish a specific therapeutic or palliative care goal. Oftentimes, recreation therapists are more successful in treating individuals who resist other treatment approaches or who are unaware of conditions or issues inhibiting their rehabilitation.

**RESEARCH**

Multiple databases such as PubMed, PsychInfo, Medline, PsychArticles etc., include peer-reviewed articles, journals, publications, and books that discuss or support the use of recreation therapy towards improving quality and effectiveness of recreation therapy in the delivery of health care services.

**CARE STANDARDS**

Recreation therapists and creative arts therapists have defined Scopes of Practice or Care Standards that guide their clinical interventions. They follow the clinical care guidelines and regulations of the Joint Commission, the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and other regulatory agencies in order

to ensure that each individual receives the care that is appropriate for their condition and situation.

**NATIONAL EVENTS**

The VA sponsors or participates in multiple national events that support, promote, and improve Veterans’ physical, social, emotional, and creative talents. Veterans, employees, and volunteers who support these programs all share a strong sense of purpose, commitment, integrity, and comradeship. These events include the Golden Age Games, various adaptive sports challenges, and the National Creative Arts Festival.

**EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS**

Recreation therapists need a bachelor’s degree or higher, in recreational therapy or a related field such as recreation and leisure studies with an emphasis or concentration in recreational therapy/therapeutic recreation. Recreational therapy programs include courses in assessment, human anatomy, medical and psychiatric terminology, characteristics of illnesses and disabilities, and the use of assistive devices and technology. Bachelor’s degree programs includes successful completion of a 14 week minimum internship supervised by an Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS), and pass the National

Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) exam.

A qualified recreation therapist is someone who is nationally certified as a CTRS, usually referred to as Recreational Therapists. Qualified professionals are certified through NCTRC, which requires a bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited university, a formal internship and the passing of a national certification examination. A CTRS must maintain their credential every five years through the NCTRC recertification process. Academic programs in Therapeutic Recreation or Recreational Therapy emphasize course work in the physical, biological, and behavioral sciences and recreation and leisure theory.

