

# “Who, What, Where, How, and Why of Recreational Therapy”

By; Anne T. Wieland, CTRS, MHA

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**Who is a Recreational Therapist?** A qualified recreational therapist is someone who is nationally certified as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS). Qualified professionals are certified through the **National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (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.

**Who does a Recreational Therapist Treat?** Recreational Therapists may work with a wide range of individuals requiring health services including geriatric, mental health, addictions, general medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, developmental disabilities and pediatric clients.

**What is Recreational Therapy?** "Recreational Therapy" means a treatment service designed to restore, remediate and rehabilitate a person’s level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition. Recreation Therapy aims to improve an individual's functioning and keep them as active, healthy and independent as possible.

**Where does a Recreational Therapist Treat?** Majority of Recreational Therapists are employed by health care agencies and work in traditional inpatient hospitals or health facilities, residential facilities, community mental health centers, adult day care programs, substance abuse centers, hospice care, community centers, in school systems, private practice in home and community as well.

**How does Recreation Therapy happen?** Recreational Therapists are standard treatment team members in rehabilitation services. Recreational Therapy is listed as a rehabilitation therapy service in the Joint Commission (JC) standards. In addition, recreational therapists are designated as treatment team members in the acute brain injury, the post-acute brain injury, and the inpatient rehabilitation standards of the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) includes recreational therapy in the mix of treatment and rehabilitation services used to determine federal compliance in skilled nursing, rehabilitation (physical and psychiatric) and long-term care facilities. Therapeutic Recreation is specifically indicated as a Related Service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A few states regulate this profession through licensure, certification, registration, or regulation of titles. The unique feature of Recreation Therapy that makes it different from other therapies is the use of recreational modalities in the designed intervention strategies. The concept of healthy living is incorporated into treatment to ensure both improved functioning and to enhance independence and successful involvement in all aspects of life.

**Why Recreation Therapy?** Current research indicates a significant number of positive health outcomes resulting from participation in Recreational Therapy programs: Improvement in Physical Health Status/Improvement in Psychosocial Status/Improvement in Cognitive Status/Improvement in Life, Recreation &Community Activities. According to the US Department of Labor, "The rapidly growing number of older adults is expected to spur job growth for recreational therapy professionals and paraprofessionals in assisted-living facilities, adult daycare programs, and other social assistance agencies.