

American Art Therapy Association Fact Sheet



The American Art Therapy Association (Association) represents more than 5,000 professional art therapists and others related to the art therapy profession who are dedicated to the belief that the creative process involved in art making is healing and life enhancing. The Association works in collaboration with its 40 Chapters in 34 states across the country to enhance networking opportunities for art therapists, conduct community events, provide education opportunities, and promote community-wide communications services.

The mission of the Association is to serve its members and the general public by:

- encouraging the highest quality of art therapy services to the public;
- facilitating communication among members and colleagues;
- supporting legislative efforts at the state and federal levels;
- disseminating information to the general public, art therapists, and related mental health professionals; and,
- recognizing excellence in clinical, professional, educational, and research activities.

Background and Practice

Art therapy is a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the art therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem. A goal in art therapy is to improve or restore a client's functioning and his or her sense of personal well-being. Art therapy practice requires knowledge of visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms) and the creative process, as well as of human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.

Today, art therapy is widely practiced in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centers, forensic institutions, schools, crisis centers, senior communities, private practice, and other clinical and community settings. During individual and/or group sessions, art therapists elicit their clients' inherent capacity for art making to enhance their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Research supports the use of art therapy within a professional relationship for the therapeutic benefits gained through artistic self-expression and reflection for individuals who experience illness, trauma, mental health problems, and those seeking personal growth.

Art therapy is an effective treatment for people experiencing developmental, medical, educational, and social or psychological impairment. Individuals who benefit from art therapy include those who have survived trauma resulting from combat, abuse, and natural and manmade disasters; persons with adverse physical health

conditions such as cancer, traumatic brain injury, and other health disability; and persons with autism, dementia, depression, and other disorders. Art therapy helps people resolve conflicts, improve interpersonal skills, manage problematic behaviors, reduce negative stress, and achieve personal insight. Art therapy also provides an opportunity to enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of art making.

Educational Standards

A master's degree is required for entry-level practice in art therapy from institutions of higher education recognized by regional accreditation bodies approved by the Department of Education. Minimum educational, professional, and ethical standards for the profession are established by the Association, a membership and advocacy organization which serves its members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence, and developing and promoting knowledge in, and of, the field of art therapy.

The Association's Education Committee establishes the Education Standards used by the Educational Program Approval Board (EPAB) to review art therapy masters programs for compliance and accreditation. Approved programs can be found on the Association's website. Educational requirements include theories of art therapy, counseling, and psychotherapy; ethics and standards of practice; assessment and evaluation; individual, group, and family art therapy techniques; human and creative development; multicultural issues; research methods; and, internship experiences in clinical, community, and/or other settings.

Art Therapy License and Credentials

The Association supports federal and state policies, legislation, regulations, judicial actions, and initiatives that encourage, promote, and support efforts to gain a professional art therapy license and licensure of art therapists. In addition to the professional art therapist license some art therapists can also be licensed in their state as a counselor, marriage and family therapists, social worker and other licenses.

The Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. (ATCB), the credentialing body for the profession of art therapy, confers and administers professional credentials to art therapy practitioners upon achieving a master's degree in art therapy. ATCB's mission is "to protect the public by promoting the competent and ethical practice of art therapy through the credentialing of art therapy professionals." Those who hold ATCB credentials are required to adhere to the ATCB Code of Professional Practice.

The ATCB is an independent organization from the Association and the EPAB. ATCB grants professional practice credentials to art therapists at three levels: Registered (ATR) granted upon completion of graduate education and postgraduate supervised experience; Board Certified (ATR-BC) granted to Registered art therapists who pass a written examination and is maintained through continuing education; and Certified Supervisor Credential (ATCS) offered to qualified Board Certified art therapists who have demonstrated substantial supervision qualifications.

Find a Professional Art Therapist

Credentialed art therapists who meet the high level of education and experience required for the profession can be located through Find-a-Therapist or the Association's Art Therapist Locator. Credentials of a practitioner can be verified through the ATCB.

Membership Benefits

Members of the Association have access to a wide array of benefits such as the Annual Conference, the Institute for Continuing Education in Art Therapy, *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, and other benefits that support career advancement, provide practical support materials and resources for members, and enable easy access to research and information useful to those interested in the field of art therapy.

For more information, please contact the American Art Therapy Association

4875 Eisenhower Avenue, Suite 240, Alexandria, VA 22304

www.arttherapy.org / info@arttherapy.org

1-888-290-0878, 703-548-5860, 703-783-8468 FAX