Process for Changing the Medicaid Reimbursement Qualifications in the State of Mississippi to Include Art Therapists

Presented by Susan Ainlay Anand, ATR-BC, ATCS, LPAT
Overview of the Session

Gaining inclusion of art therapy services as a reimbursable expense in the Medicaid regulations in your state can be challenging, especially since each state is unique. This webinar has been developed to provide the basic process used in my state to achieve that goal. It is expected that while the regulations and the personalities may be different, most likely the process will be very similar where you practice.

When art therapists in the state of Mississippi were recognized through the Licensed Professional Art Therapist title protection law in 2000, we knew the implementation process to enable Medicaid reimbursement had just begun. The lessons learned along the way and tips for success will be shared with you in this webinar.

By working together with key stakeholders, our relatively small but determined group was able to achieve real results. We hope that by sharing our process, it will inspire you and your colleagues to also pursue this goal.
About the Presenter

Susan Ainlay Anand, MA, ATR-BC, ATCS, LPAT received her masters in art therapy from New York University. She works with children and adults in inpatient and outpatient settings and has been in practice for 30 years.

As an instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Susan provides art therapy services and teaches psychiatry residents about the use of art therapy with medically ill and psychiatric patients. She also provides group art therapy to adults who have been diagnosed with cancer at Baptist Health Systems.

She frequently provides workshops and training on the benefits of art therapy and use of the creative process to strengthen resilience.
Learning Objectives

After participating in this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Learn how to identify key decision makers within your state who have the ability to impact change in Medicaid regulations and other important partners in the process.

- Know what to include in your case statement and proposal for regulatory change.

- Learn a process that successfully resulted in a change in the Medicaid regulations in my state. Hopefully knowledge of this process will help you do the same.
Background

- In 2000, the Mississippi Legislature passed a bill that replaced Art Therapist certification with the Art Therapist license. It had been a long struggle that was ultimately successful, but it took years to accomplish.

- Then as a chapter we began the process of changing Mississippi’s Division of Medicaid regulations to include licensed art therapist as a named provider qualified for reimbursement.

- In December 2006, licensed art therapist was authorized under the Victim Compensation Administrative Rules as a “Qualified Mental Health Provider.”
For two consecutive years (2007 and 2008), the Chapter was able to enlist the support of legislators to introduce bills in the House that would provide for the inclusion of art therapists as service providers for the Division of Medicaid. Both years, the legislation died in subcommittee due to tight state Medicaid budgets. Some legislators viewed the addition of art therapists as service providers as “expansion” of Medicaid requiring more money.

A key member of the staff at the Division of Medicaid suggested that a change might occur without legislation, but rather through an amended state plan. The Chapter was requested to submit a proposal to the Division of Medicaid.
• In October 2009 a proposal was submitted to the Division of Medicaid for the state of Mississippi to include art therapy as a covered mental health expense under Medicaid.

• In 2012, the director of Mental Health Programs informed the Chapter that the Division of Medicaid was working on a plan to establish art therapists as providers at community mental health centers (public and private).

• In January 2013, after many conversations, meetings, and additional research, the state plan for Medicaid was changed to add Art Therapy as a reimbursable expense for Licensed Professional Art Therapists (LPAT). The new state plan went into effect on July 1, 2013.
Three Tiers of Advocacy

**Leaders**: including champion legislators, staff supporters within Medicaid, Licensure Board, etc.

**Middle Level Grasstops**: Hospitals, Clinics, Juvenile Justice, Mental Health agencies and other organizations

**Grassroots** – all art therapists in the state
Advocacy Messages

- Develop a "talking points" sheet for those who are advocating for the Medicaid change - make sure that everyone understands the "cultural nuances" of the state. For example Mississippi is very different than Maryland.

- And finally, and foremost, the message has to be that this is not about jobs for art therapists or reimbursement for us but it is about providing quality, effective, evidence-based therapy services.
Steps to gain inclusion of art therapist as a qualified, reimbursable provider under Medicaid included a great deal of persistence and the following:

1. Chapter members discussed the concept and confirmed their willingness to proceed. They identified the volunteers involved and a key Medicaid contact person for the Chapter. It’s important that one person such as the Governmental Affairs Chair be the lead.

2. Gathered information and background about art therapy to provide to decision makers in the process.

3. Gained endorsement from important and varied art therapy supporters.

4. Identified how Medicaid regulations are changing and met with key Medicaid leadership to gauge their interest, gather advice, and begin the process.

5. Researched the basic occupational information.

6. Submitted a formal proposal and case statement for Medicaid reimbursement. Chapter leaders followed up regularly.

7. When the regulatory change was approved, the team informed Chapter members about how to qualify for Medicaid reimbursement.
1. Chapter discussion and confirmation of willingness to proceed and the volunteers involved.

- Developed an understanding of our state’s Medicaid regulatory process and how to “work within the system.” Look online at the state Medicaid administration to understand the system.

- Shared the process with Chapter members, gained their support, and recruited volunteers to help in the process. Listened to our members about their concerns and stumbling blocks to reimbursement.

- Identified places in which art therapists were working that could be good examples of the importance of the art therapy services provided. Asked them to request a letter from their employers on the organization’s letterhead as an example to be used in presenting our case. Be sure to include the largest employer groups as well as community agencies.
2. Gather information and background to provide to decision makers in the process.

The materials needed for the proposal that we were developing to submit to the state Medicaid Division included:

- An overview of art therapy including the requirements in becoming an art therapist.

- Use the “What Is Art Therapy?” and the “History of Art Therapy” - both can be found on the American Art Therapy Association’s website.

- Examples of how art therapy was used in a variety of settings in the state.

- Testimonials about the effectiveness of art therapy with clients as provided through a release from family members or the client.

- Facts about the number of art therapists in the state, the impact of art therapy services on Medicaid funds, and the positive impact on people.
3. Gain endorsement from important and varied art therapy supporters.

- We sought support from mental health professionals (social workers, counselors, and marriage and family therapists), medical professionals, and directors of agencies, hospitals, and schools.

- We also secured the support of the dean of the University of Mississippi Medical School, and the head of the largest hospitals in the state.

- We included letters of support from the American Art Therapy Association and the Art Therapy Credentials Board with information about each organization.

- And, it helped to form relationships with Medicaid staff who were knowledgeable about how to help us achieve our goal and were familiar with art therapy.
4. Identify how Medicaid regulations are changing and meet with key Medicaid leadership to gauge their interest, gather advice, and begin the process.

- Review your state’s Medicaid website and find information related to art therapy and practice.

- Review the American Art Therapy Association’s PowerPoint presentations: *Overview of Medicaid and Medicare* and *Medicaid for Children with Mental Health Needs* both found on the American Art Therapy Association’s Public Policy page on in the members-only website. [www.arttherapy.org]

- Also review *Codes for Reimbursement: Online Search Tools* in the “Public Policy” page of the members-only website under the “Insurance Information and Reimbursement Claims” heading.
5. Research the basic occupational information

Art therapy is a relatively affordable alternative to other interventions in mental health treatment. So we documented the reimbursement ranges being used by art therapists for private carrier insurance and surveyed other art therapists with the help of the national office to gather national coding and hourly rates for Medicaid.

We included the Service Contract Act (SCA) Occupational codes noting the SIN, and the General Standard hourly rate per the SCA.

Included the Department of Health & Human Services HCPCS codes and conduct a survey with the National Office, to pin point the codes most often used by art therapists. See the CPT - Codes for Reimbursement, Online Search Tools, CPT, ICD-9, HCPCS (A-V) which is located in the American Art Therapy Association’s Public Policy section of the members-only website. Refer to the list of service descriptions under which art therapists code their services.

Gathered current information on the number of licensed art therapists in the state of Mississippi to include in our proposal so that Medicaid decision makers could judge the financial impact of including art therapy services on the state’s available Medicaid funds.
Facts on Our Side

- Many employers in our state require licensure to establish applicant eligibility for art therapy positions.

- Licensed Professional Art Therapists (LPATs) are listed as “professional staff” in the MS State Department of Health, “Minimum Standards of Health for Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities” and as “qualified mental health providers” for the Victim Compensation Division of the State Attorney General’s Office (reimbursable services).

- Licensed art therapists have been approved as mental health volunteers with local chapters of the American Red Cross, and employed at universities and colleges, mental health centers and agencies, the State Hospital, schools, and with grant-funded programs across the state.

- These facts were also included in the proposal as a reference.
6. Submit a formal proposal and case for Medicaid reimbursement and follow-up regularly

- The Mississippi Art Therapy Association (MSATA) holds exhibits in the state capitol building and other special events year round to provide education and exposure for art therapy, and we garner other media exposure throughout the year to heighten awareness of art therapy. We were able to use our press coverage to inform the Medicaid officials. You can also refer to the American Art Therapy Association’s online Media Center to find copies of national media from top publications to include in your materials as well.

- We developed packets of information and disseminated them to everyone we met with related to Medicaid reimbursement. A CD was made of the proposal to provide digital coverage of material.

- Other information included in the proposal:
  - Letters of support from Hospitals, community agencies and when we had a release letters from family members about those in their family who had benefited from art therapy and how.
  - A definition of art therapy provided by the national Association and information about the educational requirements. Including the national database of research studies, publications and articles about art therapy was extremely helpful.

- We met with key personnel within the Medicaid Department of our state periodically to track progress. Prompt follow-up with information requested was important to the process.

- Very often it seemed as if our interests were not being taken with as much gravity as we thought they should, but eventually a plan to include art therapy in Medicaid regulation was achieved. So be very persistent and never give up.
6. **Submit a formal proposal and case for Medicaid reimbursement and follow-up regularly, continued.**

- A model Proposal can be found on the Public Policy section of the Association’s members-only website.

- The proposal should include:
  2. Educational Requirements, Training, and Credentials as per the Association’s website.
  3. Licensure-range of licenses held by art therapists in your state.
  4. Research-found under the research section of the Association’s website.
  5. State Sanctions or regulations-applicable in your state.
  6. Letters of Support from a variety of respected sources.
  7. Articles from national and state-wide news sources-look in the Association’s Media Center.
7. When the regulatory change has been approved then inform Chapter members about how to receive reimbursement

- Keep Chapter members informed throughout the process.
- Help to train art therapy members on the forms and other requirements for Medicaid reimbursement.
- Provide a simple “how to” document.
- Refer members to the Association’s other webinars on applying for Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement.
Lessons Learned

- Work within the Medicaid system and get to know the key personnel and stay connected.

- Identify and utilize professional relationships with employers such as hospitals and community programs to support this effort.

- Be persistent and follow-up after each conversation or meeting with representative of the Medicaid system.
Materials and Resources

- To find additional resources and materials to support your efforts, go to the “Public Policy” section of the members-only website at www.americanarttherapyassociation.org, and explore the section under the “Insurance Information and Reimbursement Claims” section for the Model Medicaid Proposal, and “What is Art Therapy” document. Also see the Case Statement located in the “Achieving the Art Therapy License” section. Also see AATA: Toolkit: Working with Medicare & Medicaid in the “Career Center and Resources” section.

- Find media coverage on the Association’s members-only website in the “News and Articles” section and look for good examples and articles in the Association’s Toolkits which are located in the “Career Center Resources” section to further explain the impact of art therapy on groups who need our services.
Thank you for all of your efforts to help art therapists access Medicaid reimbursement.