

Advocating for Therapeutic Recreation

What is Therapeutic Recreation?

Therapeutic recreation (TR) is a purposeful therapy that everybody can benefit from. It can be a spark of hope that somebody encounters to enhance their enjoyment in life by improving overall health and well being. TR utilizes recreation and other activity based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions. It goes above the specific disability and takes on a holistic approach. It treats the mind, body, spirit and soul of the individual. TR also places a strong emphasis on inclusivity. Specialists provide many different opportunities for normalizing experiences in recreation for everybody in all walks of life.



“ Recreation’s purpose is not to kill time, but to make life, not to keep a person occupied, but to keep them refreshed; not to offer an escape from life, but to provide a discovery of life.”

Basic Principles and Values

Principles

Therapeutic recreation has a code of ethics that is used as a guide for promoting and maintaining the highest standards of ethical behavior.

4 Core Values

Right to leisure

All individuals, regardless of their special needs, illnesses, disabilities, limitations, or other circumstances that may affect their full participation, have the right to pursue leisure as a condition necessary for human dignity and well being.

Autonomy

This value means that the individual receiving therapy has the right to govern oneself and make their own decisions and choices. TR relates to this because it helps them maintain some degree of autonomy by providing opportunities to make choices.

Optimal health

“The mission and purpose of TR has always been anchored in a commitment to facilitating the achievement and maintenance of health” (Coyle & Shank, 2004, p. 112). TR provides services that recognize that the individual’s state of health is the ultimate goal of the therapy.

Quality of life

Quality of life is a person’s assessment of their position in life, taking into consideration their health and well being. TR can contribute to people’s quality of life by opening up the fullness of leisure opportunities presented to them. Leisure opportunities can produce feelings of freedom, joy and satisfaction which are essential to quality of life.

Health Professions Related to Therapeutic Recreation

There are a lot of different health professions that relate to TR and that a person can pursue after obtaining a degree in TR. Some of the more common professions include occupational therapy, physical therapy and child life. Some professions that are not as common but still relate to TR are an Inclusion Specialist, working in mental health services and being an Adaptive Sports Coordinator. All of these professions believe in the same values of keeping the patient the number one priority and bettering the quality of life for each individual worked with.



Evidence for The Profession

Models and Theories That Make TR Effective

Therapeutic recreation uses a strength based approach known as the social model as well as the medical model for the basis of this field of practice. The medical model benefits the profession because the goal of the model is to treat, and cure an individual's symptoms of an illness or disability as well as expand and improve the functionality of the individual. The social model focuses more on removing barriers so an individual can come to their full potential and normalize their interactions within the community. This model views society as the problem and not the person like the medical model. However, both models have their positives and negatives but when they are worked together both of the models achieve the best possible outcome of the individual receiving therapy.

What Does It Take to Be a Therapeutic Recreation Specialist?

To become a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist a person must first complete a Bachelor degree in recreation therapy in addition to specific support coursework. They must also complete a minimum of a 14 week/560-hour internship supervised by a CTRS. After this is complete they are able to take the NCTRC Certification Exam. Once they have passed this they are now a CTRS.

Recreation therapists typically have an interest in the creating and helping areas. Some qualities that are helpful within this career is compassion, critical-thinking skills, leadership skills, listening skills, patience and speaking skills. A CTRS needs to be able to think quickly and make adaptations to activities when a patients' therapy plan requires changes. A recreation therapist must also be kind, gentle, and sympathetic when providing support to patients and families.



Impact Therapeutic Recreation Has On This Agency

The field of TR has created an environment within this agency that allows all aspects of the patient’s life to be connected. TR is the field that connects-the-dots to facilitate home-school-community linkages. During each session many lifelong skills can be learned and nurtured through recreation.