



Therapeutic Recreation

PURPOSE. PASSION.
PROGRESS.

NATIONAL
THERAPEUTIC
RECREATION
SOCIETY



National Recreation
and Park Association



Therapy. Leisure.

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

Leisure and recreation are basic human rights—critical to health, happiness, and quality of life. Many people need assistance, or lack the ability to access these opportunities. Therapeutic Recreation (TR) and those therapeutic recreation professionals who dedicate their lives to TR witness the benefits daily.

As the national association for park and recreation professionals and citizens, the National Recreation and Park Association

(NRPA) has an entire branch, the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS), dedicated to providing therapeutic recreation professionals with the tools and information they need to succeed. NRPA also offers opportunities for networking with these professionals through educational events such as the National Institute on Recreation Inclusion (NIRI) and annual Congress & Exposition. NTRS also has an active voice in NRPA's legislative and public policy initiatives.

Take the opportunity to Learn more today.

For some, joining the ranks of the therapeutic recreation profession can be intimidating — but exciting at the same time. The opportunities are endless, and the rewards are un-measurable.

What is therapeutic recreation?

Therapeutic Recreation (TR) uses treatment, education, and recreation services to help people with illnesses, disabilities, and other conditions to develop and use leisure opportunities in ways that enhance their health, functional abilities, independence, and quality of life.

TR includes functional intervention, leisure education, and recreation participation. These three elements enable people with limitations to improve functional abilities, enhance well-being, and increase independence; learn recreation skills and attitudes that can be used throughout life; and experience health and growth through rewarding leisure and recreation experiences.



The importance of Therapeutic Recreation

Why is therapeutic recreation important? What are the benefits?

TR assists people of all ages and backgrounds in getting well, living well, and staying well. Through recreational activity, TR contributes to a healthier mind and body; makes life more satisfying and fun; and enables the ability to maintain a sense of wellness.

Most importantly, TR empowers participants to enjoy life and reach their goals every day!

What can TR do for people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, or other health-related disabilities?

Overall, TR assists these individuals with learning new skills and/or modifying old ones to compensate for abilities lost. For example, TR programs can improve self-care skills, re-educate individuals on how to get involved in community recreation programs, and most importantly, they can provide a feeling of self accomplishment.

Get Well. Live Well.

How can TR specifically assist people with developmental disabilities?

Therapeutic recreation offers people with mental retardation, cerebral palsy or other developmental disabilities an opportunity to develop and use their physical and intellectual abilities to the fullest; develop independence; gain confidence in themselves; interact with others; and participate in community recreation activities.

How can TR specifically assist people with mental illness?

Taking time to “play” is an important part of good mental health. TR gives people an opportunity to feel good about themselves and their accomplishments; improve relationships with others; relieve tension; develop healthy coping techniques; and express and communicate their needs.

How can TR specifically assist older adults with limitations?

TR services provide older adults the chance to remain socially active; express themselves creatively; and live full and independent leisure lifestyles.

Can TR benefit others too?

YES! TR can help people who are chemically dependent by enabling them to learn new skills that will enhance their self-esteem; find healthy alternatives to alcohol or other drugs; and feel fit and appreciate the value of wellness.

Also, TR is a great outlet for at-risk youth and juvenile and adult offenders by providing healthy outlets for energy and emotions; a way to release tension that can be destructive if it remains bottled up; a way to teach people to cooperate with others—through group activities; and to improve self-esteem. TR helps people understand that they need to feel good about themselves before they can feel good about others.

Top 15 Benefits of TR

Improves physical abilities—muscle strength, balance, coordination, flexibility, mobility, and range of motion.

Builds confidence and self-esteem—focusing on strengths and developing and enhancing skills.

Promotes greater self-reliance—essential to independent living.

Eases fear, anger, isolation, loneliness, and despair—ensuring peace of mind.

Strengthens interpersonal skills—encouraging individuals to join activities that nurture social relationships and create a feeling of group acceptance.

Manages stress—through activities that relax both mind and body.

Enriches the quality of life—by providing opportunities for creativity and self-expression.

Teaches responsibility—helps individuals learn to accept responsibility for their actions, their leisure, and their lives.

Provides opportunities to learn by doing—giving themselves credit for their efforts and achievements.

Provides ways to set goals—that challenge individuals to do their best.

Provides ways to express feelings—in positive and effective ways.

Provides ways to act assertively—standing up for their rights without infringing on the rights of others.

Provides opportunities to learn new approaches to old skills—to continue to enjoy leisure, and live as independently as possible.

Provides opportunities to develop new interests—that take advantage of existing skills and require the development of new skills.

Uses leisure well—by participating in positive, constructive activities—which can be fun at the same time.

These and the many other benefits of TR truly improve people's lives.

Get Well. Live Well.



How are TR programs and services designed/created?

TR programs and services are designed with specific individuals to meet their specific needs. TR specialists work with a team of professionals to conduct an assessment of the person's abilities, interests, needs, and desires; set goals (both short-term and long-term) based on the findings of the assessment; design a written plan to achieve goals; and evaluate progress periodically to determine how well the individual is meeting his or her goals.

Stay Well.



In what types of settings does TR take place?

TR takes place in a variety of settings—services may be available in or through:

- » Hospitals
- » Rehabilitation centers
- » Summer camps
- » Long term care/assisted living
- » Centers for independent living
- » Sheltered workshops
- » Community mental health centers
- » Public and private schools
- » Adult daycare centers
- » Psychiatric facilities
- » Outpatient clinics
- » Youth and adult correctional facilities
- » Group homes
- » Senior centers
- » Home healthcare agencies
- » Substance abuse facilities
- » Community park and recreation departments
- » Transitional living facilities
- » Vocational training centers

Get Well. Live Well.

Who does a TR professional work with to assess patient needs?

The therapeutic recreation specialist is part of a team of highly skilled professionals who work together to assess each individual case, but each team member has a very important and specific role.

- » **Physicians and nurses** care for medical needs.
- » **Psychologists and psychiatrists** help with emotional problems.
- » **Physical therapists** help restore physical skills.
- » **Occupational therapists** teach skills necessary for self-sufficiency.
- » **Vocational counselors** help individuals prepare for and find work.
- » **Social workers** help individuals adjust to new situations by providing counseling or directing them to other sources of help.
- » **Prosthetics and orthotists** make and fit artificial limbs and braces.
- » **Speech-language pathologists** help with communication problems.
- » **Childlife specialists, art music therapists, dieticians, and athletic trainers** are also providers of therapeutic recreation services.

What training is necessary to pursue a career in TR?

TR is a recognized human service profession that utilizes recreation involvement as a means to psychological and physical health, recovery, and well-being. TR has been a recognized form of health care and human service provision for over four decades. The Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) defines a Recreational Therapist, qualified as an individual who, at a minimum, is a graduate of a baccalaureate degree program in recreational therapy accredited by a nationally recognized accreditation body; is currently a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC); meets any current legal requirement of licensure, registration, or certification; or, has the documented equivalent in education, training, and experience and is currently competent in the field.



In order to obtain CTRS certification, candidates must first meet minimum educational and experiential requirements and then pass an examination. The examination is administered by an independent, experienced, national testing service. CTRS' are also required to

become recertified every five years. CTRS' become recertified by accumulating a combination of work experience, continuing education, and/or retesting.

For more information about CTRS certification, visit the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification at www.nctrc.org.

About NTRS

Supporting NRPA members who are dedicated to advancing therapeutic recreation services for persons with disabilities, NTRS consists of practitioners, students, consumers, and friends who believe that leisure and recreation are basic human rights, and are critical to health, quality of life, and happiness.

NTRS provides members with the opportunity to enhance their understanding and commitment to the field by creating a network of support and information designed to better explain the practice and benefits of the therapeutic recreation profession. Members of NTRS can take advantage of mentoring opportunities and an open forum for the exchange of ideas.

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For more information on NTRS, contact NRPA's NTRS staff liaison at 800.626.NRPA (6772) or NTRSnrpa@nrpa.org. Or, visit www.nrpa.org and click on *branches and sections*.

To learn more about NRPA membership, contact 800.626.NRPA (6772), email membership@nrpa.org, or visit www.nrpa.org/membership.



Stay Well.

Healthy Lifestyles. Livable Communities.

It Starts In Parks!

About NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of some 19,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, recreation initiatives, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Headquartered in Ashburn, Va., NRPA works closely with local, state, and national recreation and park agencies, citizen groups and corporations to carry out its objectives. Priorities include advocating favorable legislation and public policy; continuing education for park and recreation professionals and citizens; providing professional certification, academic accreditation, research and technical assistance; and increasing public awareness of the importance of parks and recreation. For more information, visit www.nrpa.org.



**National Recreation
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