

Therapeutic Recreation Week, July 10-16, 2011

Therapeutic Recreation:

What is recreational therapy?

Recreational therapy, also referred to as therapeutic recreation, is defined by the United States Department of Labor as a profession of specialists who utilize activities as a form of treatment for persons who are physically, mentally or emotionally disabled.

Differing from diversional or recreation services, recreational therapy utilizes various activities as a form of active treatment to improve the physical, cognitive, emotional and social functioning and to increase independence in life activities of persons disabled as a result of trauma or disease. Recreational therapy services are delivered by qualified professionals who are formally trained and credentialed and currently we have a Bill in the New York State legislature to become licensed in New York State.

Recreational therapy services offer a diversity of rehabilitation benefits addressing the needs of individuals with a range of disabling conditions. A national research project to determine the efficacy of therapeutic recreation in rehabilitation was sponsored by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and Temple University.

The consensus from the participants of the project indicated:

- **Recreational therapy services are an effective means for improving physical, cognitive, social and emotional functioning.**
- **Recreational therapy services develop the skills needed to enhance functional independence for community living and promote a higher quality of life for the individual and their family.**
- **Recreational therapy services provide individuals with disabilities mechanisms to prevent declines in physical, cognitive, and psychosocial functioning and as a result *reduce* the need for health care services.**
- **Recreational therapy services *reduce* secondary disability and associated *higher* health care costs.**

As with all allied health services, research continues to be a priority for the field.

Comprehensive rehabilitation practices, including recreational therapy services are cost effective, produce treatment and rehabilitation outcomes, and respond to the life-long needs of the health care consumer.

By expanding the array of treatment options, health care providers have the opportunity to choose the most effective and efficient mix of therapies to respond to the needs of the health care consumer. Such an approach is consistent with the managed care strategy and is cost-effective.

Recreational therapy services reduce primary and secondary disabilities with resulting savings on costly health care services.

Active involvement in recreational therapy services:

- ***improve*** community living skills and ***reduce*** the need for extended inpatient hospitalization;
- ***improve*** independent functioning thus reducing demands on health care providers;
- ***improve*** physical functioning and fitness impacting on general health and well-being;
- ***positively*** impact on emotional status to promote recovery and enhance compliance with medical treatment; and
- ***promote*** the development of social skills for integration into vocational and avocational endeavors among other outcomes. The cost-benefit of such outcomes is significant.

A Therapeutic Recreation Licensure Bill is currently in Committee in the Senate and Assembly in New York State...encourage your lawmaker to *move* the Bill to protect the public from harm!