

RECREATIONAL THERAPY LICENSURE IN NEW YORK STATE:

NOW IS THE TIME!

The debate to consider licensure for recreational therapy in New York State continues. There have been many discussions at conferences, workshops, meetings and informally among colleagues on the issue of licensure. Despite our good intentions, nothing has been put into action until now.

This time words have been put into action by the formulation of a Recreational Therapy New York State Licensure Committee. This committee will explore the feasibility of licensure for recreation therapists in New York State. The committee is a grass roots committee formed out of a concern that recreation therapists are not given the opportunity to provide *core* services in AIDS Adult Day Programs in New York.

In the spring of 2007 the Department of Health, in particularly The AIDS Institute, who oversees services for AIDS Day Treatment Programs, required that only licensed mental health professionals or licensed creative arts therapists can provide these *core* services. I'm sure you can see the impact that this has caused for recreation therapists. In essence, recreation therapists can no longer provide *core* services in AIDS Day Treatment Programs if they are to be reimbursable according to the Department of Health. As a result, this has forced AIDS Adult Day Programs to employ licensed mental health professionals or licensed creative arts therapists reducing the opportunity for recreation therapists to be employed in this setting.

A concern is will this hiring practice stop at AIDS Day Treatment Programs or will it expand to other health care settings. NOW IS THE TME! Now is the time to act on this issue before this trend toward hiring only licensed professionals in order to assure reimbursement becomes even more detrimental to the profession of recreation therapy.

Furthermore, licensure will safeguard the health and safety of the public and protect the public from harm by unqualified persons by establishing a minimum level of education, experience and competence to assure the highest degree of professional care and conduct on the part of licensed recreational therapists. Licensure will allow for the protection of the consumer by ensuring competency standards have been met in order to practice recreational therapy in New York State. The key is that licensure will monitor the practice of recreation therapy and will strengthen the integrity of the profession.

So, I and the Recreational Therapy New York State Licensure Committee are asking your support on this very important and crucial issue as we move ahead. In the upcoming months you will hear more on licensure at conferences, workshops, emails, surveys and on TR Association's websites. In the meantime, I invite you to contact Vincent Bonadies, 212-539-6366, vincentb@vcny.org or Linda Dianto, 718-876-4747, ldianto@svcmcn.org regarding any comments or questions.