



Health Career Directory

Art Therapist

Overview

Creative art therapists, which include dance and drama therapists, use artistic media to help clients maintain and improve their physical and mental health. Their primary focus is to help clients recognize and develop often unexplored inner resources.

Creative arts therapists use creative and artistic approaches to:

- treat mental and physical illnesses
- support individuals who have disabilities
- promote wellness, creativity, and personal growth.

They provide a supportive environment and therapeutic approaches that use non-verbal processes to facilitate personal or interpersonal awareness and therapeutic change.

They also help people who have difficulty expressing themselves due to physical, emotional or other limitations. For example, children can sometimes approach difficult issues more easily, and convey messages more clearly, through the creation of art rather than with words.

Creative arts therapists may use visual art, dance, drama, music, or a combination of arts. *Art therapists* use art in treatment, assessment and research. They provide therapeutic services for individuals and groups of people of all ages. They can also act as consultants for other mental health professionals.

Dance therapists focus on the non-verbal aspects of behaviour. They encourage clients to use creative and expressive movement to address emotional issues and improve emotional and physical health.

Drama therapists use drama, creative play, psychodrama, role play, improvisation and theatre to further clients' emotional growth and integration.

For each client, or group of clients, therapists:

- assess client needs and strengths
- identify specific treatment goals and objectives
- choose an appropriate approach and develop a treatment program
- implement programs or strategies that involve music, art, drama and/or dance activities
- evaluate the program's effectiveness on an ongoing basis

- fine tune programs as needed.

As members of therapeutic teams or as private practitioners, creative art therapists work closely with other professionals (for example, psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers and counsellors).

Who is suited to become an art therapist?

Creative arts therapists are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- creativity
- enthusiasm
- an open-minded attitude
- strong communication and social skills
- flexibility and a tolerance for ambiguity
- initiative.

They should enjoy working with people, designing and implementing creative therapy programs, and using artistic techniques.

Who employs art therapists?

Creative art therapists often work standard office hours with children and adults in a variety of settings:

- rehabilitation facilities
- hospitals
- schools
- prisons and other correctional facilities
- private practice
- community mental health facilities
- senior centres and nursing homes
- day-care centres
- counselling centres and clinics.

All therapies require a safe environment. Depending on the setting and client group, art therapists may need to remove toxic art supplies or sharp instruments, such as scissors, for safety reasons. They may work in private practices and work some evenings or weekends. Art therapists may be required to lift and carry equipment that weighs up to 20 kilograms.

Salary

Salary - \$12.33 - \$19.44

Training and education required to become an Art Therapist

Art, dance, and drama therapists need an approved master's degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Admission to appropriate master's degree programs generally requires a four year degree in psychology or a related discipline. Art therapists should also have a strong background in art, dance or drama. Go to the resource section for the educational program list for art therapy.

Career Advancement

Art therapy can be a very rewarding profession. Most art therapists stay in clinical practice for a long time. This is because they enjoy providing direct care to their patients, and working in a team environment.

Resources

Education Program

Vancouver Art Therapy Institute

<http://www.vati.bc.ca/programs/default.htm>

British Columbia School of Art Therapy

<http://www.bcsat.com/admiss.php>

Kutenai Art Therapy Institute

<http://www.kutenaiarttherapy.com/web/admission/>

Financial assistance and bursaries:

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml

Associations

American Art Therapy Association (AATA)

www.arttherapy.org

American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA)

www.adta.org

Association des Art-Thérapeutes du Québec (AATQ)

www.aatq.org

British Columbia Art Therapy Association (BCATA)

www.arttherapy.bc.ca

Canadian Art Therapy Association (CATA)

www.catainfo.ca

National Association for Drama Therapy (NADT)

www.nadt.org