



Health Career Directory

Recreation Therapist

Overview

Recreation therapists work with people who have illnesses and disabling conditions to improve their health and quality of life through leisure and recreation. Recreation therapists address these patients' barriers to independent and meaningful social contact, as well as barriers to community participation.

Main Roles

Recreation therapists work with people who have physical, mental, emotional, cognitive or social limitations that may affect their attitudes, ability, and motivation to participate in leisure. They enable such people to maintain healthy, balanced lifestyles.

Recreation therapists work with patients to:

- remove barriers that stop patients from participating in meaningful leisure
- educate patients about the physical, mental, social, and emotional health benefits of participating in recreation activities
- help patients practice skills to improve their ability to participate in leisure and community activities as independently as possible
- maintain or improve quality of life and overall health, despite illness or disability.

Recreation therapists work in collaboration with physicians, nurses, nutritionists, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and social workers to:

- assess patient skills, needs, interests and values related to recreation and leisure
- develop intervention plans and programs
- deliver programs for individuals or groups
- maintain records about client progress and communicate with the health team
- evaluate the success of intervention plans and programs.

Who is suited to become a recreation therapist?

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

- excellent communication skills
- enthusiasm
- a positive and flexible attitude
- good judgment, initiative and accountability
- the ability to work independently and as part of a team.

They should enjoy working with people, developing and implementing creative programs, and using specially designed equipment and techniques.

Who employs recreation therapists?

Recreation therapists are employed in a variety of settings:

- hospitals and related urgent and community care facilities
- long-term care and assisted living residences
- rehabilitation hospitals and clinics
- day programs and outpatient services
- private community based agencies.

Working conditions vary. For example, recreation therapists may work in health care settings, private homes, community facilities or outdoor environments. In some settings, they work shifts that include evenings and weekends.

Recreation therapists may be required to participate in activities that require above average strength and stamina. Lifting up to 10 kg often is required.

Salary

Salary Range - \$34,285 - \$48,246

Required training and education to become Recreation Therapists?

The education requirement is a degree or diploma in recreation with a specialization in therapeutic recreation. A four year degree is generally required for employment as a recreation therapist in acute care hospitals. Two year diploma program graduates may be hired as recreation therapy assistants. Employers also may require applicants to have:

- first aid and CPR certification
- training in group-based fitness instruction or therapy
- specialized training in patient assessment
- a valid Class 4 or 5 driver's license.

Career Advancement

Recreation therapists may advance in their careers depending on their academic qualifications. They may move into more managerial roles and supervise other recreation therapists in a variety of settings.

Resources

Educational Programs

Douglas College

<http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/therapeutic-recreation.html>

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

<http://www.kwantlen.ca/calendar/2012-13/health/gbtr-cert.html>

Okanagan College

<http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/courses/health/therapistassistant.html>

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

British Columbia Therapeutic Recreation Association

<http://www.bctra.org/>

Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association

<http://www.alberta-tr.org/>

Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association

<http://www.canadian-tr.org/>

Quebec Association of Activity Professionals

<http://www.qaap-aqpl.com/>

Therapeutic Recreation Ontario

<http://www.trontario.org/>