

Thank you for the opportunity to bring our efforts forward to your committee. My name is Leland Peterson. I am a board certified art therapist and President of the Art Therapy Association of Vermont. In addition to practicing as an art therapist in Montpelier Vermont, I am also an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Creative Arts Therapies at Concordia University in Montreal Canada and am an affiliate faculty member in the psychology program at the Union Institute and University in Cincinnati, Ohio. I have taught art therapy, liberal studies, art, and psychology courses for the past 25 years and I developed and implemented the Creative Arts Therapies Master's Degree Program at Concordia University in Montreal Canada.

In our testimony today, I will outline our general statement about the need for certification and then speak specifically to the educational requirements needed to become an art therapist and the national certification. My colleagues, Betsy Graziadei MA, ATR-BC will address the current work of art therapists in the state and then Maggie Connors MT-BC will address the need for certification for music therapists.

Our coalition of art and music therapists are seeking to establish certification for each respective discipline or profession. We believe that such certification will offer positive benefits to consumers of such services by making these services more widely available and by regulating the practice of music and art therapy by reducing potential harm to consumers. We hope that this certification will allow designated agencies to hire additional therapists to support their mission to serve in Vermont's many communities. The certification title will also make Vermont a more attractive place to set up a practice. Many Art and Music Therapists in Vermont have established vital small businesses that contribute to their communities. (see list of sample practices in Vermont and witness statements). New practitioners will both serve a need in the state for more mental health services and economically contribute to their communities and the state. In addition, as art and music therapists are uniquely qualified to use art and music respectively with many clientele who cannot make use of other verbal therapies. They can fill an important need in many communities which are challenged by a large need for mental health and allied health services.

Our recommendation is to establish an advisory board of at least one art therapist and one music therapist to assess candidates for certification. As both art and music therapy have robust national educational standards and nationally recognized credentialing for each discipline, the certification standard would be straightforward and uncomplicated to apply to certify art therapists and music therapists in Vermont. The title of Board Certification in Music Therapy and Board Certification in Art Therapy would be the basic criteria for state certification. In contrast, the process for art therapists to apply for licensure as LCMHC's is complicated and cumbersome with many redundancies that add time and expense to the process and do not allow many art therapists to obtain licensure without additional classes, exams and expense of supervision. In fact only about 10 of the approximately 35 art therapists in the state have obtained LCMHC licensure. A new hurdle has also arisen in that CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) are changing the standards for educational approval in 2024. The standards are becoming more specific and appear to no longer provide any flexibility to accept art therapy courses within the CACREP guidelines. More importantly, CACREP accredited programs or closely aligned non-accredited programs are the only ones that will be accepted for LPC licensure (Licensed Professional Counselor) in many states in the future. Given this development, art therapists in many states are attempting or have been successful in obtaining licensure as Licensed Art Therapists.

I will describe what art therapy is, describe salient details of art therapy education, and how art therapy is accredited on a national basis.

What is Art Therapy:

Art Therapy is a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the Art Therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem.

Art therapy is widely practiced in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centers, forensic institutions, schools, crisis centers, senior communities, private practice, and other clinical and community settings. During individual and/or group sessions art therapists elicit their clients' inherent capacity for art making to enhance their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Art therapy has developed as a distinct profession over the past 50 years. There are 31 Accredited Art Therapy educational programs nationwide. These programs are accredited by CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs). This organization accredits educational programs in fields such as Cardiovascular Technology, Exercise Physiology and Surgical Assisting. CAHEEP is recognized by CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation). Art Therapy programs located in or near New England include: Lesley University, Drexel University, New York University, Hofstra University and others. Professional entry to art therapy requires a master's degree. The educational program requirements include, but are not limited to:

Theories of art therapy, counseling, and psychotherapy

Ethics and standards of practice

Assessment and evaluation

Psychopathology and Diagnosis

Individual, group, and family art therapy techniques

Human and creative development

Multicultural issues

Creativity, symbolism, metaphor

Research methods

Internship experiences in clinical, community, and/or other settings. (600 supervised hours)

Programs require 60 credits for degree completion

**Professional Accreditation as an art therapist:**

Art Therapists are credentialed through the ATCB (Art Therapy Credentialing Board). Credentialing and Certification offered through the Art Therapy Credential Board constitute recognition of current competence and adherence to the Code of Ethics, Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures in the practice of art therapy. All credentials conferred by the ATCB is an independent assessment of competency and a greater attestation of an individual's ethical compliance and current skills than education or work experience alone. Earning and maintaining a credential is an indication that the individual meets the minimum professional experience, is in compliance with the ATCB's ethical code and professional conduct standards set by ATCB. In order to obtain Board Certification, an art therapist must complete 1500 hours of post –graduate supervised practice and pass an examination offered through the ATCB. The ATCB's Board Certified Art Therapist Credential (ATR-BC) is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCAA).