

THE RESPONSILITIES OF THE NURSE IN ART THERAPY

Art therapy is an established mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of people at all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight, according to AOL's popular .

Art therapy provides therapeutic, healing benefits for patients in hospitals and other medical settings, and is used with greater frequency to significantly reduce a broad spectrum of symptoms related to pain, anxiety, and discomfort. Art therapy helps individuals cope with complex health-related issues, lifestyle transition, grief, expression and communication, and more(1-3).

The adult Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) in ambulatory services has art therapists providing group and individual therapy, and case management; board certified licensed art therapists are clinical supervisors, primary therapists, team leaders, and program director. Each of the specialty tracks providing recovery services for clients with serious mental illness (intensive psychiatric rehabilitation, co-occurring, cognitive rehabilitation, and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy) have always had a significant creative expressive component - the use of art therapy is perceived as an integral part of the recovery process.

Art therapists organize client art shows, provide both studio and process oriented groups, and use the art process to enhance independent functioning in cognitive and social skills as well as activities of daily living. Several of the art therapists have additional training in mindfulness, dialectical behavior therapy, and addiction treatment. Graduate art therapy students from the area programs add enthusiasm, new ideas, and stimulate creative energy for both clients and staff.

Art therapists provide hospital in-services, grand rounds, and substance abuse training, as well as lectures for graduate training programs. Throughout the area, St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester is perceived as a model program for art therapy within their high quality, award winning psychiatric services.

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Art therapy integrates the fields of human development, visual arts, and the creative process with models of counseling and psychotherapy. **Art therapy is used with children, adolescents, adults, older adults, groups, and families to assess and treat:**

- anxiety, depression, and other mental/emotional problems
- mental illness
- substance abuse and other addictions
- family and relationship issues
- abuse and domestic violence
- social/emotional difficulties related to disability or illness
- personal trauma, post traumatic stress disorder and loss
- physical, cognitive, and neurological problems
- psychosocial difficulties related to medical illness

Some art therapists work as part of a healthcare team that includes **physicians, psychologists, nurses, mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, rehabilitation counselors, social workers, and teachers**. Together, they determine and implement a client's therapeutic goals and objectives. Other art therapists work independently and maintain private practices with children, adolescents, adults, groups, and/or families.

If you're considering this career, keep in mind that an art therapist needs certain personal qualities – such as sensitivity, empathy, emotional stability, patience, interpersonal skills, insight into human behavior, and an understanding of artistic media. An art therapist must also be an attentive listener and a keen observer. Flexibility and a sense of humor are also invaluable. For more information about pursuing this career, see the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) website.

Working Conditions

Art therapists work in a wide variety of settings -- including, to name a few:

- Hospitals and clinics, both medical and psychiatric
- Out-patient mental health agencies and day treatment facilities
- Residential treatment centers
- Halfway houses
- Domestic violence and homeless shelters