

NJEPA-TRA Promotes the TR Profession

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February is Therapeutic Recreation Month

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The American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) recently announced that the month of February will be celebrated as "Therapeutic Recreation Month". Therapeutic Recreation Month will replace Therapeutic Recreation Week, which was traditionally held the second week in July since 1984. The purpose of Therapeutic Recreation Month is to enhance the public awareness of therapeutic recreation programs and leisure opportunities for individuals with illness or disabilities.

What is Therapeutic Recreation? ATRA's definition statement is as follows:

"Therapeutic Recreation is the provision of Treatment Services and the provision of Recreation Services to persons with illness or disabling conditions. The primary purpose of Treatment Services, often referred to as Recreation Therapy, are to restore, remediate or rehabilitate in order to improve functioning and independence as well as reduce or eliminate the effects of illness or disability. The primary purposes of Recreation Services are to provide recreational resources and opportunities in order to improve health and well-being. Therapeutic Recreation is provided by professionals who are trained and certified, registered and/or licensed to provide Therapeutic Recreation."

What is a CTRS? The CTRS, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, is an individual certified by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification. CTRS's are qualified to work in long-term care, sub-acute, adult day care, assisted living, residential, CCRC's, group homes, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, school systems, behavioral health centers, substance abuse facilities, jails, and vocational facilities. The CTRS plays a significant role working with specialized populations in long-term care and sub-acute facilities. For example, sub-acute patients may greatly benefit from recreation therapy services and leisure education to ensure the patient develops and retains a healthy leisure lifestyle when he/she returns to the community. Specialized leisure education programs, support groups, and community integration programs are critical for short term patients. Other specialized units may include: dementia units, respirators/ventilator units, HIV/Aids, pediatric LTC, etc. In addition to the typical focus areas, CTRS's also work with individuals without disabilities who require assistance

to more effectively cope with stress or adjustment to life's challenges.

Throughout the month, facilities, agencies, associations, and individuals all over the country host health fairs, festivals, athletic events, information booths and more. This is a great opportunity for your health care facility to honor, promote, and educate others about therapeutic recreation. Here are just some other ways in which Administration, Department Heads, and facility staff can honor Therapeutic Recreation Specialists this month and throughout the year.

- Write an article for the facility newsletter thanking the Therapeutic Recreation Specialists.
- Send each Therapeutic Recreation Specialist a letter of appreciation.
- Announce Therapeutic Recreation Month over the public address system.
- Create and display flyers, posters, banners, etc.
- Organize and participate in other events scheduled during the month such as a talent show, themed-events, fashion show, etc.
- Have the department heads co-facilitate group activities throughout the month.
- Purchase t-shirts, mugs, pens, etc. for the Therapeutic Recreation Specialists.
- Give small gifts such as flowers, candy, gift certificates, gift baskets, etc.
- Send out a press release that promotes the benefits of therapeutic recreation at the facility.
- Host a ceremony, inviting residents, staff, and family members. Give out awards, certificates, etc.
- Incorporate mandatory annual therapeutic recreation in-services at your facility.
- Support further education and continuing education. Therapeutic Recreation Specialists often encounter difficulty in finding the time or money to attend educational sessions.
- Support and encourage national certification through the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC). (Note: recreational therapists are not CTRS's unless they've been certified through NCTRC)
- Purchase membership to state or national therapeutic recreation associations. The American Therapeutic Recreation Association is the national association and The New Jersey/Eastern Pennsylvania Therapeutic Recreation Association serves New Jersey and many counties in eastern Pennsylvania. These associations offer affordable, educational workshops and conferences. Membership leads to education which leads to higher therapeutic quality programming and better surveys!

About The New Jersey/Eastern Pennsylvania Therapeutic Recreation Association

The New Jersey/Eastern Pennsylvania Therapeutic Recreation Association (NJ/EPA-TRA), established in 1988, is a non-profit professional organization whose priority is to promote the needs of therapeutic recreation professionals in healthcare and human service settings. NJ/EPA-TRA is an affiliate of the American Therapeutic Recreation Association and is a great resource for conferences, workshops, legislative advocacy, networking, professional support,

job announcements, internship opportunities, student and professional scholarships, and more. Learn more about NJ/EPA-TRA at www.njepa-tra.com. You can join us on Facebook at www.tinyurl.com/NJEPATRAonFB.

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