

CAREER GUIDE FOR RECREATIONAL THERAPISTS

SOC Code: 29-1125

Pay Band(s): 3 and 4 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Plan, direct, or coordinate medically approved recreation programs for patients in hospitals, nursing homes, or other institutions. Activities include sports, trips, dramatics, social activities, and arts and crafts. May assess a patient condition and recommend appropriate recreational activity.

Recreational Therapists positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Rehabilitation Therapies Career Group](#):

[Therapist I](#)

[Therapist II](#)

While Recreational Therapists within the Commonwealth are all located within the Rehabilitation Therapies Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Direct Service](#)

[General Administration](#)

[Health Care Compliance](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Recreational Therapists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
2. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
3. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
4. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
5. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
6. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
7. Actively looking for ways to help people.
8. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
9. Managing one's own time and the time of others.
10. Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Recreational Therapists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Knowledge of:

1. Human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
2. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
3. Principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
4. Group behavior and dynamics, societal trends and influences, human migrations, ethnicity, cultures and their history and origins.
5. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
6. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
7. Theory and techniques required to compose, produce, and perform works of music, dance, visual arts, drama, and sculpture.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Recreational Therapists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Ability to:

1. The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
2. The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
3. The ability to combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
4. The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
5. The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you.
6. The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
7. The ability to communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
8. The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
9. The ability to come up with unusual or clever ideas about a given topic or situation, or to develop creative ways to solve a problem.
10. The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.

NOTE: The National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification <http://www.nctrc.org/> has completed a job analysis for this occupation and standards for Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities to include a minimally acceptable, entry level Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) requirements.

Tasks

Note: *The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Recreational Therapists. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.*

1. Observe, analyze, and record patients' participation, reactions, and progress during treatment sessions, modifying treatment programs as needed.
2. Develop treatment plan to meet needs of patient, based on needs assessment, patient interests and objectives of therapy.
3. Encourage clients with special needs and circumstances to acquire new skills and get involved in health-promoting leisure activities, such as sports, games, arts and crafts, and gardening.
4. Counsel and encourage patients to develop leisure activities.
5. Confer with members of treatment team to plan and evaluate therapy programs.
6. Conduct therapy sessions to improve patients' mental and physical well being.
7. Instruct patient in activities and techniques, such as sports, dance, music, art or relaxation techniques, designed to meet their specific physical or psychological needs.
8. Obtain information from medical records, medical staff, family members and the patients themselves to assess patients' capabilities, needs and interests.
9. Plan, organize, direct and participate in treatment programs and activities to facilitate patients' rehabilitation, help them integrate into the community and prevent further medical problems.
10. Prepare and submit reports and charts to treatment team to reflect patients' reactions and evidence of progress or regression.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

The Recreational Therapist occupation is considered a **Social** occupation and frequently involves working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

The occupation is also considered as an **Artistic** occupation and frequently involves working with forms, designs and patterns. This occupation often requires self-expression and the work can be done without following a clear set of rules.

The occupation is a **Realistic** occupation frequently involving work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. The occupation often deals with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally licensure is not required for Recreational Therapists positions in state government.

The Department of Labor states that most employers prefer to hire candidates who are certified therapeutic recreation specialists. The National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification is the certificatory agency. To become certified, specialists must have a bachelor's degree, pass a written certification examination, and complete an internship of at least 480 hours. Additional requirements apply in order to maintain certification and to recertify.

Information on certification may be obtained from:

- National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification, 7 Elmwood Dr., New City, NY 10956. Internet: <http://www.nctrc.org>

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

According to the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov>), Recreational therapists, also referred to as *therapeutic recreation specialists*, provide treatment services and recreation activities to individuals with disabilities or illnesses. Using a variety of techniques, including arts and crafts, animals, sports, games, dance and movement, drama, music, and community outings, therapists treat and maintain the physical, mental, and emotional well being of their clients.

A bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation, or in recreation with a concentration in therapeutic recreation, is the usual requirement for entry-level positions. Persons may qualify for paraprofessional positions with an associate degree in therapeutic recreation or a healthcare-related field. An associate degree in recreational therapy; training in art, drama, or music therapy; or qualifying work experience may be sufficient for activity director positions in nursing homes.

Recreational therapists should be comfortable working with persons who are ill or who have disabilities. Therapists must be patient, tactful, and persuasive when working with people who have a variety of special needs. Ingenuity, a sense of humor, and imagination are needed to adapt activities to individual needs, and good physical coordination is necessary to demonstrate or participate in recreational activities.

Therapists may advance to supervisory or administrative positions. Some teach, conduct research, or consult for health or social services agencies.

Approximately 140 programs prepare students to become recreational therapists. Most offer bachelor's degrees, although some also offer associate, master's, or doctoral degrees.

According to the Virginia Health Foundation the Educational Institutes in Virginia that offer degrees in recreation therapy are: Eastern Virginia Medical School, Longwood College, Radford University, Shenandoah University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Wesleyan College.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to:

http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Recreation Therapy**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLE
3	Therapist I
4	Therapist II

Sample Career Path

Therapist I

The Therapist I role provides career tracks for the therapists leading various recreational activities where licensure/certification is not required.

Therapist II

The Therapist II role provides career tracks for recreational therapists who supervise or lead other recreational therapists and there is no licensure requirements.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

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

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>

Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/>

Virginia Health Care foundation

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

Professional Organizations

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

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

National Therapeutic Recreation Society

<http://www.nrpa.org/index.cfm?publicationID=21>

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification
<http://www.nctrc.org/>

National Recreation and Park Society
<http://www.nrpa.org/>

Virginia Recreation and Park Society
<http://www.vrps.com/>