

Licensure of Recreation Therapists in Nova Scotia has been underway for the last 8 years. Over the last 5 years TRAAC has been in active pursuit based on our membership and the work of the Licensure Sub-Committee. In 2010 TRAAC submitted the application for self-regulation to government. The process has been slower than anticipated. In an effort to increase awareness of the profession and the request to be licensed TRAAC has created this document to assist both members and CTRS' in Nova Scotia discuss licensure with politicians the provincial election.

Licensure of Recreation Therapists in Nova Scotia

Pre-election Handbook and
Background Information

TRAAC Board of Directors &
Licensure Sub-Committee

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Advocating for Licensure of Recreation Therapists in Nova Scotia

The Board of the Therapeutic Recreation Association of Atlantic Canada (TRAAC), along with the Licensure Sub-Committee has been diligently working toward the licensure of Recreation Therapists in Nova Scotia since 2008. This process has taken longer than initially anticipated and now we head into a critical time. Prior to the election call, TRAAC's legal counsel had advised us that the time to lobby our provincial government representatives to increase their awareness, understanding and appreciation of our goal to regulate our profession, is now. We are presently organizing a workshop to assist us all in increasing our lobbying skills to continue advocating post-election.....(there will be more information coming very soon)

In the meantime, a provincial election has been called. This is a great opportunity to advocate for our profession.....

At the 2013 AGM the membership asked what they could do to help move this Act forward. The Board is looking to you.....

Now is the time to step forward.....

You will find everything you will need to advocate for your profession:

1. A "How To" Lobby summary
2. MLA's addresses
3. A Background Facts on Our Journey document

It is our hope to be active in each area of the province over the coming weeks as we head into a provincial election. Your assistance will be greatly beneficial to raise awareness of our licensure application to both individuals who were currently serving in government and those campaigning for office. You may want to consider connecting with a colleague and doing a little advocating together at community meetings, campaign offices, etc.

If you have any questions or have contacted your local candidates please email Rhonda Booth, CTRS (Advocacy@traac.ca) with your comments, insights or updates.

Together we will succeed!

Rhonda Booth, CTRS
Advocacy Chair
TRAAC 2013-2014

Background Document on Licensure for Recreation Therapists

Updated September 11, 2013

In 2003, both the Therapeutic Recreation Association of Atlantic Canada (TRAAC) and Nova Scotia Recreation Professionals in Health (NSRPH) were asked to participate in a study that “profiles Nova Scotia's health workforce, identifies human resource issues and recommends priorities for future human resource planning.” Through this study, the Department of Health (DOH) identified a number of professions that were not regulated in Nova Scotia. Shortly after this review, the DOH proposed umbrella legislation.

Though all health related occupations were invited to discuss the pros and cons of such legislation, it was quickly negated by those health professions that have long been regulated in Nova Scotia. It was at this time that TRAAC decided to explore regulation and especially self-regulation to avoid the defining our profession by another, and also explore ways to protect the public from unqualified individuals practicing in Recreation Therapy positions. In the initial research, it was found that TRAAC had much to do to research and prepare for licensure, including the development of Standards of Practice, and understanding how the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) would play a role in educating professionals and stakeholders in our efforts to pursue self-regulation.

While Recreation Therapy (Therapeutic Recreation) practice has the potential to be beneficial for persons served, it also has the potential to cause harm if not practiced according to the most current therapeutic recreation professional standards and ethical guidelines. The issue of protecting the public from harm resulting from unregulated Recreation Therapy practice is the most important basis for legal recognition. The process of seeking legal regulation requires that professional leaders provide direct evidence of public harm that has or could result from the unregulated practice of Recreation Therapy.

Recreation Therapy is provided at a wide variety of agencies and locations, including but not limited to general hospitals, mental health hospitals/centres, rehabilitation centres, addiction prevention and treatment programs, nursing homes, assisted living centres, residential schools for students with disabilities, correctional facilities, outdoor recreation/camping centres, licensed residential facilities (group homes / supervised apartments), other community-based health and human service agencies, and park and recreation departments.

Recreation Therapy is a systematic process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions based upon the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions. The purpose of the Recreation Therapy process is to improve or maintain physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual functioning in order to facilitate full participation in life.

Qualified Recreation Therapists (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists or CTRSs) practice in many settings to all ages, genders and disabilities. CTRSs make critical decisions in the assessment, treatment and the provision of client care. CTRSs must understand the disease process, physical conditions and limitations, surgical and chronic precautions, traumatic injuries, spinal cord injuries, burns, orthopedics, strokes, mental illness, substance misuse/abuse and

dementias. They must comprehend the needs of all age groups (pediatrics, adolescents, adults, and the elderly). Recreation Therapists

(CTRS) use evidence-based practice and theory-based programming to design programs and services. CTRSs are trained in research methodology, understand research design and can interpret results and integrate research findings into practice.

D. Who is the Qualified Recreation Therapist: A Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)

It is generally recognized that the NCTRC credentialing process and the CTRS credential serve as the basic criteria of the qualified provider of TR/RT services.

Standards of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for the CTRS

1. Possess knowledge of the theories and concepts of therapeutic recreation, leisure, social psychology, and human development as related to the nature and scope of human service delivery systems and the ability to integrate these in a variety of settings.
2. Possess an essential knowledge of the diversity of the populations including cultural and diagnostic groups served within the therapeutic recreation process, including etiology, symptomatology (cognitive, physical, social, sensory and communication, and psychiatric impairments), prognosis, treatment of conditions and related secondary complications. Have a basic command of medical terminology.
3. Have a thorough understanding of the assessment process utilized within therapeutic recreation practice including, but not limited to, purpose of assessment, assessment domain (including cognitive, social, physical, emotional, leisure, background information), assessment procedures (including behavioural observation, interview, functional skills testing, a general understanding of current TR/leisure assessment instruments, inventories and questionnaires and other sources of commonly used multidisciplinary assessment data), selection of instrumentation, general procedures for implementation and the interpretation of findings.
4. Have a basic understanding of the published standards of practice for the profession of therapeutic recreation and the influence that such standards have on the program planning process.
5. Possess detailed knowledge of the intervention planning process, including program or treatment plan design and development, programming considerations, types of programs, nature and scope of interventions, selection of programs to achieve the assessed needs and desired outcomes of the person served, and the impact of social issues on programming.
6. Possess basic knowledge related to the implementation of an individual intervention plan, including theory and application of facilitation styles, intervention techniques, and methods for behavioural change.

7. Have a fundamental knowledge of the processes of documentation and evaluation as incorporated in all phases of the intervention process.
8. Possess a broad understanding of organizing and managing therapeutic recreation services including, but not limited to, the development of a written plan of operation and knowledge of external regulations, personnel practices, and components of quality improvement.
9. Be able to identify and understand the components of professional competency within the realm of therapeutic recreation/recreation therapy practice, including requirements for certification, ethical practice, public relations, and the general advancement of the profession.

E: Education - Recreation Therapist, (Qualified):

An individual who, at a minimum, is a graduate of a baccalaureate degree program in Recreation Therapy / Therapeutic Recreation; is currently a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification; meets any current legal requirements of licensure, registration, or certification; and is currently competent in the field. Recreation Therapists assess and treat patients individually using interventions to restore, remediate, or re/habilitate to improve functioning and independence in life activities as well as to reduce or eliminate the effects of illness or disability.

Training

There are three paths for eligibility to write the NCTRC certification exam: Academic path; Equivalency Path "A"; and Equivalency Path "B". All of these paths include course requirements in three main areas: Therapeutic Recreation Coursework, Recreation Support Course Work, and Supportive Course Work. In addition the applicant must prove either completion of an internship or a certain number of hours of professional employment and practice in the field of RT/TR.

Examination

All applicants must successfully complete a computerized-based test comprised of several questionnaire testlets representing the core competencies expected of a practicing RT/TR. The examination covers the required knowledge areas as defined by the NCTRC Job Analysis (2007). These include: Foundational Knowledge; Practice of Therapeutic Recreation / Recreation Therapy; Organization of Therapeutic Recreation / Recreation Therapy; and Advancement of the Profession.

Recertification

To maintain the CTRS credential a certificant must either re-write the certification examination again or complete 50 continuing education contact hours over the five year period related to the NCTRC Job Analysis Knowledge areas (Background Information, Diagnostic Groupings, Assessment, Planning the Intervention, Implementing the Individualized Intervention, Documentation and Evaluation, Organizing and Managing Services, and Advancement of the Profession) and complete the required minimum number of hours (480 hours) of competent practice in RT/TR.

Pros of Licensure

As a group of professionals we have an obligation to present to those that may be impacted by self-regulation what one may consider fair, reasonable, possible and potential outcomes. Following are a list of some of those possible outcomes.

PROS

- Protects the public from individuals who are not qualified to practice due to committed criminal acts, or practice unethically
- Ensures a minimum standard for knowledge, skill, and ability for those that enter and practice in the profession
- Requires individuals who are licensed to maintain their professional knowledge and best practices through continuing education
- Ensures that individuals who practice in the private sector meet the same rigors as those employed by organizations
- Helps guide the preparatory educational bodies as to the requirements for practice
- Provides for an open public process for complaints with respect to TR practitioners to be heard and resolved
- Ensures accountability for one's practice
- Standardizes the titles of positions
- Expands job opportunities as many positions require a licensed professional

In summary, Qualified Recreation Therapists (CTRS) in Nova Scotia believe that it is in the best interests of Nova Scotians to have regulation with respect to the practice of Recreation Therapy and the entitlement and use of the term Recreation Therapist. Self-regulation is important to ensure Recreation Therapists in Nova Scotia practice with the most current standards of practice, the newest and latest knowledge and techniques based upon evidenced based research, and participate in a mandatory continuing education process. In addition, self-regulation will assist in minimizing the risk of harm to Nova Scotians.

Below is a summary of work that has been completed by TRAAC's Licensure Sub-Committee in an effort to move licensure of Recreation Therapists in Nova Scotia forward:

- ✓ Completion of Draft Recreation Therapists Act with membership approval received
- ✓ Completed and submitted application to Department of Health
- ✓ Presented application to the Department of Health and Wellness' Legislative Review Committee
- ✓ Met with Minister of Health and Wellness during TR Month (February 2013)

- ✓ Ongoing communication to Minister & Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness to follow-up on status of licensure application
- ✓ Ongoing meetings with legal counsel
- ✓ Planning and preparation for lobby workshop for members and CTRS' in Nova Scotia
- ✓ Creation of pre-election information for use by members and CTRS' in Nova Scotia

Upcoming Events

- ✓ Lobby Workshop / Training Session on October 5, 2013 (invites will arrive in your email in the near future)
- ✓ Development of a formal lobby plan
- ✓ Support lobbying of government officials to move licensure of Recreation Therapists

If you wish to discuss the above information or licensure of Recreation Therapists with a member of the Licensure Sub-Committee please contact Rhonda Booth at advocacy@traac.ca.

Licensure Sub-Committee of the
Therapeutic Recreation Association of Atlantic Canada (TRAAC)

How to Lobby

Definitions:

Lobbying – To undertake activities aimed at elected and/or non-elected government officials to influence them towards a desired outcome.

Advocacy – To support, plea, define and defend a cause. To express your views to create a shift or influence someone's perception or understanding of an issue.

Do's:

- Before contacting the candidate, check out their website and their party's election website to see what the relationship is to their viewpoints and health care and health care issues.
- See if they have a Facebook / Twitter or use any other social media outlet
- Ask to see the candidate in person or at least have a telephone conversation with them while acknowledging it is a busy time for them.
- Be prepared to clearly articulate why you want to speak to the candidate. For Example: " Hello, I am _____, a Recreation Therapist living in the riding of _____ . I am looking to meet / speak with (Candidate's name) to discuss her / his viewpoints on the Licensure of Recreation Therapists in NS"
- Address the candidate from an individual perspective.
- Try to personalize your message as much as possible and avoid a standard group format.
- Identify what you want e.g. " bring legislation to the House of Assembly with respect to the licensure of Recreation Therapists in NS in the immediate future".
- Build a compelling story that brings a human face to the issue so that others can understand how the issue affects people.
- What the benefits are to the public, the health care system and other health care providers (take a cheat sheet with you to prompt you if you wish, but **do not** read from it).
- Be able to explain what some of the potential consequences are of not bringing forth Licensure.
- Identify how your ideas match their personal or their party's policy / plan / platform or concerns / issues raised by the public.
- Identify how Licensure fits with their interest; link Licensure to things you know they support.
- If the candidate or their family / close friend has had any personal or professional experience with Recreation Therapy or the Health Care system, see if it is possibly to connect the significance of ensuring the Recreation Therapist was a qualified provider to that experience or contact.
- Make note of the support we have from other Allied Health professions / occupations.
- Remind the candidate that Licensure will help them do what they said they wanted to do.
- Ensure materials given or left behind are educational and not political propaganda.
- Seek the support of the candidate and where possible get it in writing or at least make personal written notation as to the date, time and location of the verbal commitment.

- Thank them for their time and interest.
- Above all remember to employ the five **Ps** of effective lobbying / advocacy. Show them **Passion** for the issue; Present it with a clear sense of **Purpose**; Be **Positive** and **Persuasive** in conveying your message; Always be **Polite** if challenged.

Don'ts:

- read from notes or materials you may take with you to prompt you in your discussion
- avoid jargon or terminology specific to our field
- persuade others to vote for or against a party
- support a political party

Resources:

Below is a good document for folks to review to help them in their approach

https://www.bcnu.org/HotTopics/pdfs/Tips%20on%20approaching%20politicians%20during%20a%20campaign%20_draft%204.pdf

Cabinet Ministers and Party Leaders Contact Information

Electoral District

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Shelburne

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Shelburne

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