



## **ABOUT RECREATIONAL THERAPY**

Recreational therapy, or therapeutic recreation, is a healthcare profession carried out by trained providers who use recreational activities to help improve or maintain an individual's cognitive, emotional, social, or physical functioning. People who receive recreational therapy are often ill, disabled, or elderly. The therapist provides adapted recreation opportunities in order to help the patients develop independent living skills and improve quality of life. Recreational Therapists provide treatment in healthcare facilities in New Jersey including but not limited to VA hospitals, State psychiatric hospitals, pediatric health care facilities, inpatient acute and sub-acute rehabilitation centers, long term care facilities and nursing homes, and substance abuse programs.

Since recreational therapists are not a licensed profession in this state, current regulations prevent them from providing services on child study teams in schools. If licensed, recreational therapists would be able to provide services in schools as a related service, pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Recreational Therapists work with vulnerable children and adults in facilities, and are expected to have extensive knowledge of anatomy and physiology, psychology, human development, CPR, and more. These professionals are tasked with completing assessments, creating treatment plans, and working independently with individuals with complex medical conditions in a hospital or in the community. Many of these therapists facilitate field trips for medically-complex patients in the community, oftentimes driving vehicles to transport patients on these trips; this requires professional skills and knowledge about medical conditions, CPR, crisis management, and safety.

Qualified recreational therapists hold a national certification through the National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) which requires a bachelor's or master's degree, completion of clinical training, and passing of its certification exam. These certified individuals are required to complete continuing education and renew certifications annually. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are 490 recreational therapists in New Jersey. However, there are 354 certified recreational therapists in the state, leaving 136 unregulated and unqualified practitioners providing services. Individuals without an appropriate education, clinical training, and continuing education requirements place vulnerable New Jersey residents at risk for harm. Additionally, these residents are also at a disadvantage if the services they receive are not provided by qualified individuals and they lose an opportunity for high quality, evidence-based care.



## **DESCRIPTION OF BILL CONTENT**

### **A-1604 (Conaway) and S-2389 (Singleton)**

This bill, known as the Recreational Therapists Licensing Act, defines recreational therapy and identifies its scope of practice. The bill creates a Recreational Therapy Advisory Committee within the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety under the State Board of Medical Examiners.

This Advisory Committee would be responsible for:

- a. evaluating the qualifications and determining the eligibility for licensure of all applicants under this act;
- b. issue and renew licenses for recreational therapists,
- c. investigate allegations of and conduct hearings regarding misconduct, suspend, revoke, or fail to renew licenses;
- d. maintain a list of the names and addresses of all licensed recreational therapists;
- e. establish standards for the continuing education of licensed recreational therapists;
- f. prescribe or change the fees for licensures, renewals, and other services; and
- g. promulgate rules and regulations to carry out matters delegated to the committee by the board.

Nothing in this act would apply to the activities and services of qualified members of other professions licensed by the State, when acting within the scope of their profession and doing work of a nature consistent with their training. The bill also permits students pursuing a degree or certification to perform recreational therapy services incidental to the person's course work when supervised by a licensed professional.

### **CTRS®: The Qualified Provider**

The CTRS is a certified recreational therapist who has demonstrated professional competence by acquiring a specific body of knowledge and passing the NCTRC exam. The CTRS designation is the unifying credential for recreational therapists throughout the United States, Canada, and 15 other countries with approximately 16,000 Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists in the NCTRC registry. Learn more by visiting the National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification website: <https://nctrc.org>