Recreation Therapy Service is a direct-care interdisciplinary service with a mission to improve and enrich bio-psycho-social functioning through active therapy and/or meaningful therapeutic activities to maintain or improve functional independence and life quality.

The intended outcome of the service is independence in life activities based upon the Veteran’s needs and goals.

The mission is accomplished through the professional skills of therapists, specialists and assistants through a four-step process of assessment, planning, intervention/activity implementation, and evaluation of services delivered.

The mission includes state of the art clinical care, education, technology and research within the scope of recreation and creative arts therapy services. While providing an activity based patient-centered service that integrates function, quality and meaning to one’s life.

Recreational therapy embraces a definition of "health" which includes not only the absence of "illness", but extends to enhancement of physical, cognitive, emotional, social and leisure development so the Veteran may participate fully and independently in chosen life pursuits.

The unique feature of recreational therapy that makes it different from other therapies is the use of recreational modalities in the designed intervention strategies. Although many of the treatment goals that a recreational therapist may work towards are similar to other disciplines on the rehabilitation team, the way a recreational therapist achieves those goals is what distinguishes this unique service.
Incorporating Veteran's interests, and the Veteran's family and/or community makes the therapy process meaningful and relevant.

Recreational therapy is extremely individualized to each person, their past, present and future interests and lifestyle. The recreational therapist has a unique perspective regarding the social, cognitive, physical, and leisure needs of the Veteran.

Recreational therapists weave the concept of healthy living into treatment to ensure not only improved functioning, but also to enhance independence and successful involvement in all aspects of life.

"Recreational Therapy" means a treatment service designed to restore, remediate and rehabilitate a person’s level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition. (ATRA July 2009)

Recreational therapists are standard treatment team members in rehabilitation services. Recreational therapy is listed as a rehabilitation therapy service in the Joint Commission (JC) standards. In addition, recreational therapists are designated as treatment team members (based upon need) in the acute brain injury, the post-acute brain injury, and the inpatient rehabilitation standards of the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) includes recreational therapy in the mix of treatment and rehabilitation services used to determine federal compliance in skilled nursing, rehabilitation (physical and psychiatric) and long-term care facilities. Therapeutic Recreation is specifically indicated as a Related Service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Current research indicates a significant number of positive health outcomes resulting from participation in recreational therapy programs. Evidence based outcomes are critical to the viability of Recreational Therapy as a health care provider for specific health outcomes as a result of Recreational Therapy.

Each year, VA sponsors four national events for U.S. military Veterans served by VA medical facilities nationwide. Each program enhances the physical, social and emotional well being of Veterans who participate. Veterans involved in these events and the hundreds of VA employees and volunteers who support them each year all share a strong sense of purpose and camaraderie.
Each national rehabilitation special event improves awareness of the therapeutic value of recreation, sports or the creative arts. The events are co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congressionally chartered veterans service organizations and civic groups.

Consumers, administrators, and health care providers are challenged to make informed choices regarding a wide array of treatment options and interventions available in today's health care market. With an emphasis on quality, treatment, prevention, efficacy, efficiency, and customer satisfaction, it is critical that selected intervention strategies utilize approaches that not only address a wide array of health outcomes but also reflect best practices in providing a continuum of care from treatment to prevention.

For additional Contact information:

Director, Recreation Therapy Service VACO (101/117D)
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7354

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