

PROPOSED STATE LICENSE FOR NJ MUSIC THERAPISTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Approximately two years ago, the NJAMT leadership discussed options for recognition of music therapy in response to a bill proposed by our colleagues in the NJ Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies. That bill (A-2113) would make art therapy, dance/movement therapy, and drama therapy subspecialties of counseling. When presented with the information, New Jersey Music Therapists voted to: (1) seek exemption from this bill and (2) work towards official state recognition of music therapy as a profession in NJ.

Following these events, with the assistance of a legislative consultant, Patrick Stewart, the New Jersey State Task Force on Occupational Regulation (jointly appointed by the MAR-AMTA, AMTA, and CBMT), has been working to determine the best method of recognition. The goals of this task force (NJSTF) are to increase access to music therapy services, and to ensure that *only qualified music therapists provide music therapy services in NJ* (currently in NJ, anyone can represent themselves to the public as a music therapist, and can provide services represented as music therapy).

Certain state regulations currently in place in NJ represent specific obstacles to music therapy service access. For example, music therapists who work in school settings must possess a NJ teaching license (though this rule seems to be applied inconsistently), whereas this is not the case for our colleagues in occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy. As another example, while a recent change in the early intervention regulations allow music therapy to be included in a child's IFSP (when the IFSP team deems it necessary), music therapists are unqualified to provide those services, by virtue of not being licensed professionals in NJ. Moreover, the Division of Child Behavioral Health Services has proposed regulatory changes that allow for the provision of music therapy services to at-risk children in their homes, yet they require those services to be provided by a NJ licensed music therapist (which does not, as of yet, exist).

Over the past two years, members of the NJSTF have met with numerous legislators, department commissioners, and division directors, in order to educate them about music therapy practice, music therapy research, and the qualifications of music therapists. Repeatedly, the NJSTF has been advised that state licensure is the best way to proceed. Meetings with representatives from the Office of Legislative Services further revealed that, in order for NJ to accept a credential, it must be issued by NJ (as opposed to a national certifying body).

Assemblyman Prieto, Chair of the Assembly Regulated Affairs Committee, has shared his ongoing concern about the detrimental effects unqualified music therapy practice could have on the NJ public, and has consistently supported the efforts of the NJSTF. He has strongly recommended, and has even offered to sponsor, a bill that would license music therapy in New Jersey. A summary of the proposed legislation is attached.

PROPOSED REQUIREMENTS FOR MUSIC THERAPY LICENSE

A practice act is being proposed to ensure that music therapy is provided by qualified music therapists. The intent is not to restrict the use of music, but to restrict the practice of music therapy to licensed music therapists and advanced practice music therapists

PROPOSED TITLES

Music Therapist—bachelor's degree in music therapy from an approved AMTA college/university, and passage of CBMT exam

Advanced Practice Music Therapist—48 credit hour master's degree in music therapy from an approved AMTA college/university, and passage of the highest level exam available.

PROPOSED DEFINITIONS

Music Therapy:

A therapeutic relationship in which the therapist systematically uses music and music experiences to support progress toward treatment goals. The music therapist demonstrates basic knowledge of music therapy assessment, treatment, documentation, and evaluation; and demonstrates understanding of ethical principles and current standards of practice.

Advanced Practice Music Therapy:

A therapeutic relationship in which the therapist systematically applies and integrates a comprehensive synthesis of theories, research, treatment knowledge, musicianship, clinical skills, and personal awareness to address client needs through music and music experiences. The advanced practice music therapist demonstrates comprehensive understanding of foundations and principles of music, music therapy, treatment, and management in clinical, educational, research, and/or administrative settings.

GRANDPARENTING

Music Therapist: One who meets either (1) or (2) of the following:

(1) currently holds the Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC) credential, and is in good standing with the Certification Board for Music Therapists;

--OR--

(2) currently holds the professional designation Registered Music Therapist (RMT), Certified Music Therapist, or Advanced Certified Music Therapist (ACMT), and is in good standing with the National Music Therapy Registry

Advanced Practice Music Therapist: One who meets both (1) and (2) of the following:

(1) meets one of the following criteria

(a) currently holds the Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC) credential, and is in good standing with the Certification Board for Music Therapists;

(b) currently holds the professional designation Registered Music Therapist (RMT), Certified Music Therapist, or Advanced Certified Music Therapist (ACMT), and is in good standing with the National Music Therapy Registry

--AND--

(2) meets at least one of the following criteria

(a) holds a master's degree in music therapy

(b) has completed 7 or more years of clinical experience in music therapy

EXEMPTIONS

Current state and county employees

Therapeutic musicians (i.e. drum circle facilitators, harp therapists) so long as they are working within the scope of their education and training; licensed professionals so long as they do not hold themselves out to be music therapists, or claim to do music therapy.