

Dance Therapist



Occupational Description

Emerging as a distinct profession in the 1940s, dance/movement therapy, a creative arts therapy, is rooted in the expressive nature of dance itself. Dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving a direct expression and experience of oneself through the body. It is a basic form of authentic communication, and as such it is an especially effective medium for therapy. Based in the belief that the body, the mind, and the spirit are interconnected, dance/movement therapy is defined by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) as “the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process that furthers the emotional, cognitive, social, and physical integration of the individual.”



Job Description

Dance/movement therapists work with individuals of all ages, groups, and families in a wide variety of settings. They focus on helping their clients improve self-esteem and body image, develop effective communication skills and relationships, expand their movement vocabulary, and gain insight into patterns of behavior, as well as create new options for coping with problems. Dance/movement therapy can be a powerful tool for stress management and the prevention of physical and mental health problems. Movement is the primary medium that dance/movement therapists use for observation, assessment, research, therapeutic interaction, and interventions.



Employment Characteristics

Dance/movement therapists work in settings that include psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, schools, nursing homes, drug treatment centers, counseling centers, medical facilities, crisis centers, and wellness and alternative health care centers. Dance/movement therapy is used with people of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds in individual, couples, family, and group therapy formats.



There are approximately 1,203 dance/movement therapists in 46 states and 29 foreign countries.

Educational Programs

Length. Professional training for dance/movement therapists is on the graduate level. Graduates receive a master's degree in dance/movement therapy or related degree title. Graduates from an ADTA-approved dance/movement therapy program are eligible for the DTR (Dance Therapist Registered) credential upon completion of graduate studies. Approved programs have met the basic educational standards of the ADTA, which include that the program's parent institution is accredited by its regional accreditation association.

Prerequisites. Extensive dance experience and a liberal arts background with coursework in psychology are required. For specific prerequisites, contact each graduate program.

Credentials. The ADTA distinguishes between dance/movement therapists prepared to work in professional settings within a team under supervision and those prepared for the responsibilities of working independently in private practice or providing supervision.

- **DTR: Dance Therapist Registered**—Therapists with this title have a master's degree and are fully qualified to work in a professional treatment system.
- **ADTR: Academy of Dance Therapists Registered**—Therapists with this title have met additional requirements and are fully qualified to teach, provide supervision, and engage in private practice.



Inquiries

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