

Kansas Art Therapy Association
Public Comment at KS BSRB Board Meeting 1/13/25

- Art Therapy is a Master’s level profession that is rooted in many of the same psychodynamic theories used by traditional talk therapists. Art therapy is a unique clinical discipline in that it uses *specific* interventions based on psychological theories to address and treat clinical conditions such as trauma, anxiety, depression, and developmental challenges.
- Art therapists undergo extensive training in psychology, therapy modalities, and artistic techniques, enabling them to provide direct clinical services with specific goals and measurable outcomes. The American Art Therapy Association (AATA) and other professional organizations recognize art therapy as a *unique* clinical discipline, offering services that meet *the same ethical and professional standards as other therapy services*.
- Art therapy recognizes the power of art and art-making to stimulate memories and reveal emotions. Understanding *how* art interacts with a client’s psychological disposition, and how to safely manage and interpret the reactions different art processes may evoke, are competencies that must be gained through *substantial experiential learning* that is unique to art therapy master’s degree training.
 - Backed by extensive neuroscience, the Expressive Therapies Continuum substantiates the psycho-therapeutic role that various art media can illicit from an individual. It is therefore unfit and potentially *harmful* for individuals who are not specialized in this area to conduct art with a therapeutic intent without qualifications and specialized training.
- The Kansas Art Therapy Association therefore proposes a bill that would grant licensure to Art Therapists in the state of Kansas which would:
 - Protect the Public: Without licensure, it can be difficult for members of the public to identify a properly trained art therapist. Licensure protects the public from harm, misrepresentation, and fraud.
 - awareness and popularity of art therapy have caused more and more non-art therapists and under-trained individuals to use art in clinical practice or claim that they are art therapists or “doing art therapy”.
 - Title Protection and Scope of Practice: Licensure provides legal mechanisms to counteract the large number of practitioners working outside of their scope of practice and organizations claiming to offer “art therapy training.”
 - Sustaining the Profession: In states without specific art therapy licenses, art therapists are typically required to obtain a related mental health license (most often in counseling).

- Access to Care: Licensure would increase the number of qualified and licensed practitioners to meet the public's need for mental health services.
 - Art Therapy is a good entry-point for accessing mental health care since it offers a sense of safety and comfort, and may decrease cultural stigmatization to receiving therapy compared to traditional talk-therapy.
 - Greater access to care amongst diverse communities may also positively impact health outcomes within these communities.

- Continuity of Care: For patients who have benefitted from Art Therapy in clinical settings in the community and would like access to care after discharge, ensuring better health outcomes long-term.

- Diversity in Care: Licensure would increase diversity and innovation in mental health practice, as art therapists are trained to provide individualized therapeutic interventions for diverse populations.
 - Art Therapists have the training, skills and expertise to meet the needs of neurodiverse patients, who are at high-risk for co-occurring mental health conditions, estimated to be more than three times higher in the IDD population compared to the general population.

- Attract Art Therapists to stay in/move to Kansas.
 - Art therapy is now a regulated mental health profession in 15 states and the District of Columbia. Art therapists hold professional art therapy licenses in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, and Virginia. They are regulated under related professional licenses in Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Utah. Additionally, art therapists are recognized for purposes of state hiring and/or title protection in Arizona, Louisiana, and New Hampshire.
 - There are another 11 states with current licensure bills and advocacy campaigns in progress.

- The Kansas Art Therapy Association (KATA) therefore requests that the Kansas Behavioral Science Regulatory Board endorse a bill that would grant licensure for Kansas Art Therapists for the reasons stated above and to pave a path forward to improve the mental health crisis and access to qualified care in our state.