



EDCare Kansas City
8300 College Boulevard, Suite 300
Overland Park, KS 66210
Main Line: 913.945.1277
Fax: 913.553.2547

January 10, 2025

Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board
700 S.W. Harrison Street, Suite 420
Topeka, Kansas 66603

Dear Members of the Board,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for the licensure of art therapists in our state. As healthcare continues to evolve, the integration of creative interventions has become increasingly recognized for its effectiveness in treating a broad spectrum of physical and mental health concerns. Licensure will ensure that trained, competent art therapists can provide high-quality services to our communities—particularly in behavioral health care treatment settings, where research shows that art therapy improves clinical outcomes and can reduce treatment length and save money in the long term.

As you know, approximately 390 art therapists are employed in Kansas. The Kansas Art Therapy Association (KATA) serves as a professional organization for art therapists in the state, offering resources, networking opportunities, and a referral directory for practitioners. While the Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board licenses and regulates various behavioral healthcare professions, art therapy is not currently among them.

Art therapy is a distinct mental health profession that uses art materials and creative processes to address therapeutic goals, foster emotional well-being, and facilitate lasting change. Whether practiced in inpatient units, outpatient behavioral health clinics, rehabilitation centers, schools, or community settings, art therapy provides clients and their families with a safe and often nonverbal medium for expressing and exploring complex emotions, trauma, or psychological distress. Art therapists help clients develop resilience, self-awareness, and a sense of agency over their healing process by empowering individuals to externalize their challenges.

Research demonstrates that art therapy effectively supports individuals in managing symptoms related to anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health conditions. Engaging in the creative process can lower stress levels and foster healthier coping strategies. Slayton, D'Archer, and Kaplan (2010) noted that art therapy interventions reduced emotional distress and enhanced self-regulation across diverse client populations.



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Art therapy helps improve interpersonal functioning, communication, and problem-solving abilities in behavioral health care. By participating in collaborative artmaking, clients learn to share space, provide feedback, and support one another, reinforcing prosocial behaviors. Group art therapy settings encourage empathy and teamwork, offering a constructive way for individuals to practice conflict resolution and develop healthier relationships.

Creating art in a therapeutic framework can boost self-esteem and help reframe negative thought patterns. Research published in *Frontiers in Psychology* (Regev & Cohen-Yatziv, 2018) highlights how art therapy promotes greater self-efficacy and confidence, enabling individuals to manage daily challenges with increased emotional resources.

In conjunction with evidence-based modalities—such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), and family therapy—art therapy can strengthen treatment adherence and reduce relapse. By providing a visual and tactile outlet, clients can safely process complex emotions that might otherwise be difficult to communicate verbally. This approach has been linked to increased motivation and satisfaction with treatment in both inpatient and outpatient programs.

Beyond improving mental health symptoms, research also shows that art therapy can benefit physical well-being. For instance, Nainis et al. (2006) reported that incorporating art therapy into medical settings—particularly for patients dealing with cancer or other chronic illnesses—helped reduce anxiety, alleviate pain, and improve mood and quality of life.

Another compelling reason to license art therapists is the potential to reduce overall treatment duration and healthcare costs. Art therapy can shorten hospital stays, lower readmission rates, and reduce the burden on medical and mental health systems by improving patient engagement, streamlining therapeutic goals, and enhancing adherence to treatment plans. Research indicates that when patients are offered creative, strengths-based interventions alongside traditional treatment, they experience faster relief of acute symptoms and are more likely to complete their care programs. This saves money for healthcare institutions and insurers and improves the quality of patient care by delivering comprehensive, person-centered services.

Licensure ensures that art therapists meet rigorous educational, clinical, and ethical standards. It protects the public from unqualified practitioners and upholds the profession's integrity.



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Recognizing art therapy as a licensed profession allows art therapists to collaborate more effectively with physicians, behavioral health providers, and allied health professionals—promoting holistic care that addresses physical, emotional, and social needs.

Licensure often leads to expanded insurance reimbursement, making art therapy more accessible to individuals who can benefit from it, including those in underserved or at-risk communities.

Formal licensure raises awareness of art therapy as a legitimate, evidence-based behavioral health service and helps individuals identify qualified providers who can safely and competently deliver these interventions.

Given the growing body of evidence supporting art therapy's effectiveness—especially in behavioral health treatment, cost savings, and improved care efficiency—I respectfully urge you to consider establishing licensure for art therapists in Kansas. Doing so will enhance the continuum of care for individuals of all ages and backgrounds who stand to benefit from these transformative therapeutic services.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to professional standards in our healthcare community. Please feel free to contact me if you want more information or have any questions regarding the impact and benefits of art therapy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jay Memmott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jay Memmott, MSW, Ph.D., LSCSW, LCAC, LCSW, ACSW
Family Therapist
EDCare – Kansas City