

## **NADTA Scope of Practice**

**2017**

In order to protect the public and to maintain high standards of professional practice, this document outlines the basic scope of practice and education necessary to be considered a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) by the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA). The NADTA's mission is to support and advance the profession of drama therapy with the intention of enhancing the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities through supporting and educating drama therapists. This document is designed for drama therapists, clients, families, allied professionals and facilities, state and federal legislators, private and public payers, and the general public.

### **Definition of Drama Therapy and Drama Therapist**

Drama therapy is defined as the intentional use of drama and theatre processes to achieve therapeutic goals. Drama therapists provide psychotherapy for individuals living with mental health and behavioral concerns that may result in psychological suffering, impaired relationships, or distress in daily activities. Drama therapy promotes wellness and healing within the context of a therapeutic relationship for individuals of varying ability levels across the lifespan. In North America, a drama therapist is a credentialed professional who has completed graduate level education and clinical training requirements established by the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA) and who holds a credential as a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT). It is the responsibility of drama therapists to gain the appropriate

training and education, to be aware of the ethics of professional practice, and to continue educating themselves in the work of drama therapy.

## **Drama Therapy Practice**

A registered drama therapist (RDT) conducts drama therapy through the use, application, and integration of the coursework and training required by the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA).

Drama therapy is an active, experiential approach to facilitating social, emotional and cognitive change. Drama therapy can take many forms depending on individual and group needs, skill and ability levels, interests, and therapeutic goals. Processes and techniques may include improvisation, theater games, storytelling, and enactment. Many drama therapists make use of text, performance, or ritual to enrich the therapeutic and creative process. Through storytelling, projective play, purposeful improvisation, and performance, participants are invited to rehearse desired behaviors, practice being in relationship, expand and find flexibility between life roles, and perform personal and social change.

The theoretical foundation of drama therapy lies in drama, theater, psychology, psychotherapy, anthropology, sociology, occupational therapy, play, and interactive and creative processes. This approach can provide the context for participants to tell their stories, set goals and solve problems, express and process feelings and emotions. Participants can expand their repertoire of dramatic roles to find that their own life roles have been strengthened. Through drama therapy, the depth and breadth of inner experience can be actively explored and interpersonal relationship skills can be enhanced. Areas of practice and competence in drama therapy include:

- Providing drama therapy services to individuals, groups, families, and communities.

Drama therapy treatment includes all interactions between clients and therapist from the point when a therapeutic contract is established to the termination of treatment/care.

- Conducting clinical assessments, drama therapy assessments, and (when appropriate) providing diagnosis to identify the issues and challenges to be addressed in therapy and to determine if treatment is indicated. Assessments are conducted for the purpose of establishing goals and objectives to empower individuals to cope with life situations, reduce stress, experience/promote growth, change behavior, and make well-informed, decisions.

- Developing an individualized treatment plan based upon the findings of the assessment to focus the course of therapy and extra-therapeutic activities. The drama therapy treatment plan includes individualized goals and objectives as well as strengths and needs of the assessed client. The plan identifies necessary drama therapy approaches and interventions to achieve identified objectives.

- Implementing of professional drama therapy treatment interventions including case management, evaluation, treatment planning, assessment, and referral.

- Implementing drama therapy and clinical interventions to support the agreed upon treatment plan including all activities designed to address the clinical issues identified, to achieve treatment objectives, and utilizing strategies that effectively respond to multicultural populations.

- Evaluating the client's response to the provided drama therapy and treatment plan, documenting progress, re-assessing client abilities, and suggesting modifications to continue to support client health and wellness.

- Developing a plan to determine when drama therapy services are no longer needed in collaboration with the identified client, as well as, where appropriate, natural, social, and community supports, and other allied professionals.
- Conducting applied research and program evaluation, including a systematic analysis of all aspects of therapy and its effectiveness.
- Acknowledging and understanding legal issues, ethics, and standards including all aspects of therapy that involve statutes, regulations, principles, and values as well as knowledge of relevant laws and ethics impacting practice.
- Conducting crisis intervention.
- Consulting allied professionals and collaborating with other supports, where appropriate, in regards to the needs being addressed in drama therapy and providing education and outcomes as to how drama therapy is addressing the identified needs.
- Providing supervision of other drama therapist and clinical professionals
- Utilizing drama therapeutic techniques with communities and within organizations for purposes of needs assessment, community and social engagement, addressing community or social trauma, exploring social justice issues, and promoting social change
- Engaging cultural humility as a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique.
- Implementing an awareness of how our various cultures influence our values, beliefs

and behaviors, including our understanding of health, distress, help-seeking, relationships, and all aspects of social life.

- Understanding the impact of cultural oppression on mental health and addressing its negative impacts throughout the therapeutic process.

## **Populations and Settings**

Participants benefiting from drama therapy span the life spectrum. Client populations may include, but are not limited to, those with severe mental illness, persons recovering from addiction or eating disorders, families in need of support, persons with developmental disabilities, trauma survivors, members of the LGBTQI population, prison inmates, homeless persons, people with HIV/AIDS, veterans, older adults, at-risk youth, and individuals seeking to improve quality of life and general wellness. Registered Drama Therapists practice in many settings, including: Mental Health Facilities; Schools; Hospitals; Private Practice Settings; Substance Abuse Treatment Centers; Adult Day Care Centers; Correctional Facilities; Community Centers; After-school Programs; Shelters; Group Homes; Nursing Homes; Corporations; Theaters; Housing Projects; Medical Schools; Training Organizations.

## **Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Cultural Responsibility**

Registered Drama Therapists (RDT) strictly follow the North American Drama Therapy Association's [Code of Ethics](#) which regulates professional responsibility, clinical and cultural competence, confidentiality, informed consent, professional relationships, principles of physical contact, and responsibility towards research participants.

Registered Drama Therapists also adhere to the [NADTA Guidelines for Cultural Responsibility](#) as they relate to commitment to cultural awareness and knowledge of self

and others, commitment to cultural response/ability in drama therapy practice, training, supervision, research, advocacy and organizational change. Drama therapy is conducted in a manner congruent with the client's level of functioning, cultural considerations, and clinical needs across multiple areas.

## **Education & Clinical Training Requirements**

### **Registered Drama Therapist (RDT)**

A RDT is a Master's level credential requiring coursework in applied psychology and drama therapy, experience in theater, and supervised internship and work experience. RDTs are board certified in the practice of drama therapy and follow the NADTA Code of Ethics.

The educational requirements for the RDT involve:

- A Master's or Doctoral degree in drama therapy from a program accredited by the NADTA;
  - or a Master's Degree or Doctoral Degree in a field related to drama therapy from an accredited college or university AND completion of in-depth training in drama therapy through NADTA's alternative training program under the guidance of a Board Certified Trainer (RDT/BCT).
  
- Completion of an 800 hour drama therapy internship experience with at least two different populations (emotionally disturbed, acute psychiatry, substance abuse, physically disabled, child & adolescent, elderly, forensics, etc.)
  - minimum of 300 direct-client contact hours; a maximum of 50% (150 hours) of the direct-client contact time may be one-on-one contact, while the remaining 50% (150 hours) must be group work.

- minimum of 30 hours of supervision by a Registered Drama Therapist, credentialed creative arts therapist, credentialed special educator or credentialed mental health professional;
- an additional 470 hours of additional internship hours (including, but not limited to, staff meetings, preparing for sessions, contact notes, reviewing professional materials, and other administrative work).

Basic eligibility requirements aside from the internship to become an RDT include but are not limited to:

- 500 hours of drama/theatre experience. This may include acting, directing, and/or improvisational work studied or performed in a college, community, or professional setting.
  
- 1000 hours of paid experience as a drama therapist is required under the supervision of a RDT, credentialed creative arts therapist, or credentialed mental health professional or special educator in order to become a RDT.
  
- 500 hours of additional training/work experience is required which may include:
  - Additional hours of drama therapy internship over and above the 800 required hours.
  - Additional hours of work experience over and above the 1000 required hours.
  - Additional hours of clinical training in drama therapy or a related therapeutic field. This can include workshops, conferences, post-graduate institutes, practica, institutes, or apprenticeship programs.
  - Up to 100 hours of personal psychotherapy within the last 5 years.

A RDT is required to maintain their credential by attaining ongoing continuing education credits through courses, workshops, professional service or other forms of professional

development. These continuing education credits are audited by the NADTA in order to maintain a high standard of best practices and ensure ethical practice.