

Advocating for Recreation Therapy Services

A How To Guide & Workbook

Written by: Chloe MacDonald (Zinck), CTRS



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide you with a step-by-step guide for advocating for Recreation Therapy (RT) services within your service setting. It includes lined areas where you can start compiling your thoughts for things you might want to include. While completing your proposal will provide a sound argument for services, there is never a guarantee that its presentation will result in the addition of allocated funds or services. It will, at the very least, raise the profile and importance of your role and the information can potentially be referenced in grant writing, among other things.

A helpful tip before we get started:

In any setting, there is a chain of command. It typically begins with your supervisor or manager and progresses through senior leadership. While cc'ing everyone is not recommended, do not be afraid to cc your supervisor or manager's next direct superior. In most cases, those in positions of leadership greatly value staff who take initiative in striving to improve the services of which they oversee. It should also be considered that those within management positions often immediately think of their budget for services and can be hesitant to entertain any idea of something that would result in further strain. With that being said, you will speak to these areas within your proposal so it is important that you do not take no for an answer. Ask politely and respectfully for a designated meeting time for you to review your proposal. At this point, hopefully all of the information you have included will make your case.

Okay, let's do this!

^{*}Disclaimer: This document provides a guide for writing a proposal for additional Recreation Therapy services. It is up to the individual to include information they feel is relevant and this document may not cover all areas. Use your experience and discretion to adapt this document as required.



Step 1: Notice of Confidentiality

A confidentiality notice is something you should consider including as you may reference direct examples and experiences within your service setting, which could be considered confidential. A confidentiality notice also serves as a reminder to never include confidential patient information.

For example: This document, together with any attachments, is intended exclusively for its recipient(s) as it contains information that could be considered confidential. This document has been prepared for the following individuals:

Jane Doe, Manager, Identified Service Area
Janet Flow, Director, Identified Service Area
Who are the people you will be sending your completed document to for review?



Step 2: Executive Summary

As Recreation Therapy professionals, we recognize that not everyone understands our field. The Executive Summary page is a great place to explain your field, its role within the interdisciplinary care team, and to also set the stage for what you are going to be proposing.

What is Recreation Therapy? What is its purpose? Does your agency website ident or describe the RT services it provides? What treatment settings is RT involved in	
What will your main argument be? What will your proposal outline? Acknowledge evaluation and revision are a necessary part of any service/system and try to connewhat you are proposing to the overall mission/vision or your organization.	



Step 3: The Argument

This might be the most important section of your proposal and it will undoubtedly be the longest. This section is where you will share evidence to back up what it is you are proposing.

Step 3.1: Existing Resources and Gaps in Service

In this section, you will outline the existing RT resources you have and why you need more.

How many RT positions do you have presently? What are their responsibilities? What is the current gap in service and why are your current resources not enough to address it?						



Step 3.2: Population Rationale

In this section, you will briefly reiterate what RT services do and their benefits as they relate to your specific population.

How do RT services benefit your population? Why are these benefits necessary?

For example: "In Inpatient Mental Health and Addictions settings specifically, RT focuses or social needs such as decreasing isolation, supporting the development of healthy relationships, improving social skills, building schedule and routine, engagement and motivation and exploration of new opportunities. All of these skills are necessary for independence and individual's ability to successfully manage their conditions in the community, which aligns directly with the mission of Direction 2025."							



Step 3.3: Outline Your Concerns/Gaps/Improvements with Research

In this section, you will outline (and reference properly) what the research says about each one of your specific concerns and population.

For example: "For Inpatient Mental Health and Addictions specifically, research shows RT services support mood regulation and symptom reduction, reduction in the use of pro re nata (PRN) medication, seclusion and restraints, and supports community reintegration and placement readiness, among other areas." Identify your specific talking points and find credible sources to support them. The RT Wise Owls website has a database of literature for a variety of populations. http://sites.temple.edu/rtwiseowls/.

Concern 1:	 		
Concern 2:			
Concern 3:			



Step 4: Case Example

Case examples or successful pilot projects of RT services being used to address the specific concerns you have outlined, whether they are from local or international programs, should be included. These will detail what you are proposing in action and support how RT is the solution.

pull from for this section. If there are not, is what you are proposing truly supported by evidence? Maybe it is, but you will need to argue this.					
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Step 5: Position Outline & Evaluation Methods

In this step, you will outline the exact position you are proposing and what you believe its responsibilities need to be. It is recommended to identifying the position as a time-limited trial or pilot project as it is more difficult for an organization to implement a permanent position when they have not yet seen the outcomes.

Therapeutic Assistant, Activities Coordinator, etc.)? What are the responsibilities? Ho will you evaluate the new positions effectiveness? Are there specific areas you will be keeping statistics or records?						
keeping stati	istics or records.	'				
						



Step 6: Financial Implications

This might be the second most important section of your proposal. Your agency's budget will be at the forefront of your manager's thoughts throughout the presentation so this section needs to be argued well. It is also important to include financial data from your agency to support your claims and remember to connect these statistics to your main argument and the evidence you have provided. Ask around – there will be someone who is able to gather the information you are looking for.

For example: Research shows that regular Recreation Therapy involvement can reduce the duration of a stay in hospital. What does that look like financially for the average patient stay? What about the average number of patients seen per year?

What is the cost of hospital bed per day, the average cost of admission per person, etc.? What about all of the costs that do not get considered like staff burnout, PRN medication, time filling out incident reports, etc.? Is there a cost for extra staff like security or sitters? How long would it take for the position to be paid for?							



Step 7: The Grand Finale

In this section you will provide a clear and concise conclusion to your proposal and reiterate why it is vital your manager and others consider this. This section should be short and sweet and really drive home what you have tried to argue. However, if there is any additional resources, whether literature or video, you can reference them here. Of course, the resources should directly relate to your gap in service.

For example: "Finally, as an additional resource, I highly recommend viewing the following video which presents the experiences of Ashley, an individual who lives with Autism and has spent a substantial amount of time in seclusion. http://attitudelive.com/player-page/seclusion."

Why is your gap in service important to address? Why, now more than ever, is RT the answer to this concern? Relate again to the agency's overall mission/vision.						
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Step 8: Acknowledgements

Our managers and their leadership are busy people. Take a moment to thank them for taking the time to review your document and listen to your presentation. You can also reference your experience working for your agency and how you are excited to be part of an organization that is striving to transform the lives of your population.

who will you be thanking? what did you appreciate?							

Once you have completed the acknowledgements section, the only other section to include is your references. With that being said, additional sections that you may want to consider including could be:

- 1. Interdisciplinary team How will the new position work with and support the interdisciplinary team and the individuals overall care plan? Provide specific examples of how you work with Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Physicians, etc.
- 2. Recommendations for staffing compliments Is there literature that supports a specific staffing compliment for your setting or population?
- 3. Other service areas Will the new position or its responsibilities support other service areas or the transfer of care?
- 4. Team support Are others within your interdisciplinary team in support of the new position? Would they be willing to put this in writing?

Some final tips to remember prior to submitting your proposal include:

- 1. Grammar, spelling and formatting Review, review, review your document and ensure you are utilizing the same formatting (i.e., APA) throughout.
- 2. Person-first language We need to lead by example and advocate for the abilities of the people we serve.
- 3. Overall language People often get confused by what it is we do as Recreation Therapy professionals. Consistent language is key and it is imperative that you connect with the Nova Scotia Therapeutic Recreation Association to ensure we are all sharing the same message!
- 4. Consult others People are willing to help! Whether it is statistic information, providing a reference of support for the position, or reaching out to another RT who works in a similar agency.
- 5. Feedback If there is someone appropriate who is open to providing feedback on your proposal? If so, utilize them, however, ensure confidentiality is maintained.