

February 2nd , 2026

## **Position Statement: Standing with Therapeutic Recreation Ontario to Protect Recreation Therapy and Support Sustainable Healthcare**

The British Columbia Therapeutic Recreation Association (BCTRA) expresses strong solidarity with Therapeutic Recreation Ontario (TRO), its members, and the individuals and communities impacted by recent cuts to Recreation Therapy services in the Niagara region.

Recreation Therapy is an evidence-based health and community care profession delivered by qualified professionals through planned, goal-directed, and purpose-driven leisure interventions. This specialized practice supports quality of life, mental health, social connection, functional ability, and meaningful participation across the lifespan, particularly during periods of illness, disability, and life transition.

### **Clinical Impact of RecT in Acute Care**

Hospitalization is associated with stress, anxiety, disrupted sleep, loss of control, social isolation, and disengagement — all of which negatively affect recovery and discharge readiness. Recreation Therapy directly addresses these risks.

Evidence shows Recreation Therapy interventions improve psychological well-being, reduce anxiety, stress, fear, and pain, and support engagement, adaptation to hospitalization, and functional recovery (Adam-Castelló et al., 2023; Hoag et al., 2022). In contrast, lack of meaningful, structured activity in hospitals leads to boredom, emotional distress, loss of autonomy, and reduced sense of purpose, particularly for older adults (Clarke et al., 2018). Reliance on passive activities such as television represents missed opportunities to support coping and recovery (Nelson, 2018).

Recreation Therapy practitioners assess participation needs, set individualized goals, and deliver interventions that stabilize mood, support coping and adjustment, and maintain functional engagement — needs not addressed through medical care alone.

### **System Consequences of RecT Cuts**

Removing Recreation Therapy from acute care:

- Eliminates structured interventions that reduce distress and support engagement
- Increases psychosocial care demands on nursing and allied health staff
- Reduces therapeutic participation that supports recovery readiness
- Leaves participation and adjustment needs unmet

Evidence confirms Recreation Therapy produces measurable benefits during hospitalization (Hoag et al., 2022; Adam-Castelló et al., 2023). Eliminating these services does not remove patient needs — it shifts risk to patients and burden to already stretched care teams.

Recreation Therapy is essential care, not an add-on. It's evidence-informed, recovery-focused, harm-preventing, and critical to sustainable healthcare.

## Call to Action

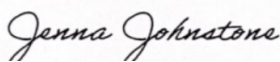
To prevent risk and protect patients and healthcare systems, BCTRA calls on:

**Policy-makers and health system leaders** to recognize Recreation Therapy as an essential, evidence-informed component of care and to protect service funding.

**Health and community care organizations** to integrate Recreation Therapy within care planning and resource allocation, guided by research and professional standards.

**Recreation Therapy professionals and allies** to engage in advocacy by:

- Reviewing and sharing the advocacy letter developed by Therapeutic Recreation Ontario;
- Amplifying evidence-informed messaging regarding the impact of Recreation Therapy on patient outcomes, care team workload, and healthcare system efficiency;
- Participating in coordinated efforts that highlight the **critical role of Recreation Therapy** in supporting sustainable healthcare delivery.



Jenna Johnstone, MA, CTRS  
President, BCTRA



Courtney Steen, BTR, CTRS  
Executive Director, BCTRA

## References

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