



**Testimony for Public Hearing**  
**Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services**  
**February 4th, 2020**

Good Afternoon Chairman O’Hara and Members of the Health & Human Services Committee. My name is Jennifer Jackson and I am a Registered, Board Certified Art Therapist. I too am a member of the Nebraska Art Therapy Licensure Coalition, current board member of the American Art Therapy Association, and past presidents for the Iowa Art Therapy Association and Kentucky Art Therapy Association. I’m currently Executive Director for Heartland Counseling Services, Inc., a Region 4 provider, that covers 11 counties in northern Nebraska for mental health and substance abuse.

I am here today in support of certification for art therapy.

**Summary**

The Nebraska Art Therapy Coalition, American Art Therapy Association (AATA), and consumer organizations are asking the legislature to consider passing certification in order to:

1. Expand behavioral health that includes mental health and substance abuse services to Nebraska residents.
2. Protect the public and Nebraska’s mental health and substance abuse consumers by distinguishing a level of education and training, while reducing confusion and misuse regarding art therapy.
3. Name and define “art therapist” in the state of Nebraska, to be certified and in return licensed when applying for their LMHP, ensuring title protection for this professional clinical practice.
4. Promote professional clinical growth in the state in order to retain and attract professional art therapists. It took me 10 years before I moved home after graduate school in Kentucky. I wanted to move to Omaha immediately after graduation and in fact my husband did move to Omaha my last semester in anticipation of settling there. However, I couldn’t find a board-certified art therapist to supervise me, there was only one at that time and she was just too busy so my husband moved back to Kentucky and we stayed where I practiced.

**The Problem**

Art therapists work with vulnerable populations assessing and treating individuals with mental, emotional, physical, and/or developmental disorders. Included in this diverse range of people, are fragile children, elderly, and veterans suffering from PTSD, and yet there is no licensure under Nebraska law, ensuring that an art therapist is qualified to perform such treatment and assessment.

In Nebraska, suicide is the second leading cause of death for kids 14-25; 1 in 4 children have experienced trauma; and 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness yet only 40% receive help. Art Therapists can help with lowering these statistics by offering services throughout Nebraska.

The national standard for Art Therapist training is just like licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists.

1. 2-3- year degree.
2. 60 hours of graduate coursework, including clinical internships
3. Supervision in the field after graduation
4. Earning professional registration and
5. Passing the board certification exam, assures the highest level of professional standards. These are regulated by the Art Therapy Credentials Board- ATBC.

Unfortunately, currently in Nebraska, **anyone** can claim to be an 'art therapist' and can 'Treat' an unsuspecting parent, child or individual in distress, **without** the education necessary to deliver accurate assessment and treatment. This is a public health hazard.

As the public has become aware of the value of **art therapy**, the lack of regulation of art therapists becomes more problematic.

Recent stories have reported the benefits of **art therapy** with various populations, **including** soldiers returning from war with PTSD. (see: The National Geographic *How Art Heals the Wounds of War* February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015). As a result, more people are selecting **art therapy** treatment and healing. Parents, soldiers, and other consumers deserve the peace of mind, knowing that those who offer the psychotherapeutic treatment and assessment **services of art therapy** are trained at the Master's level and regulated. In addition, the lack of quality control and uncertainty regarding those who presently can legally call themselves '**art therapists**', have made third party payers and clinics reluctant to reimburse.

### **Two Primary Benefits of Certification**

1. **Consumer Protection:** This certification will protect the public by identifying a standard of professional clinical practice, thereby removing the guesswork and lack of clarity that Nebraskans and behavioral health centers currently face. By ensuring that only nationally accredited Art Therapists use the title of Art Therapist, the state protects the public and ensures that the Nebraskans will be assured of the qualifications of the person from whom they or their child / family member are receiving services.
2. **Access to the proper mental health care and treatment at an affordable cost:** Access to quality mental health care is critical in addressing the mental health needs of the public. Art Therapists provide efficient treatment, particularly with patients who have difficulty communicating verbally, with children, survivors of traumatic events, individuals with developmental disabilities and those suffering from loss and grief.

### **The American Art Therapy Association**

The American Art Therapy Association, Inc. (AATA) was founded in 1969 in Louisville, Kentucky and now has over 5,000 members in all 50 states, and as part of its mission and purpose, sets national standards for the profession in education, training, and clinical practice. The Art Therapy Credentials Board, ATCB, also works to protect the public by promoting the competent and ethical practice of art therapy through the credentialing of professional art therapy clinicians.

### **Other States and Art Therapy: In total-Art Therapy Licensure or Title Protection is in 17 states.**

Seven states recognize Art Therapy Licensure: KY, NJ, NM, NY, MS, MD, OR, DE.

Six states recognize Art Therapy Licensure within a related field: UT, TX, WI, PA, NY, PA

Four states recognize Title Protection for Art Therapists: AZ, CT, LA, NH, CT

16 states and District of Columbia are working on Art Therapy Licensure: CO, NE, KS, MN, IA, MO, TN, MI, IN, OH, VA, NC, SC, FL, VT, MA.

### **Art Therapy Licensure Efforts**

In total, there are **34** States and District of Columbia that currently have or are in the process of recognizing or developing professional Art Therapy licenses.

### **Art Therapy in Nebraska**

Approximately 30 Art Therapists work in Nebraska in settings ranging from hospitals, cancer treatment centers, to community mental health centers.