

4/22/19 &

To The Nebraska Unicameral,

Please accept this letter as support for the expansion of access to art therapy services in Nebraska.

I am a Provisionally Licensed Mental Health Practitioner and a Provisionally Licensed Certified Master Social Worker currently employed in partial hospitalization (PHP). I received my BSW from UNO in 2011 and my MSW from UNO in 2016.

I have worked in several areas of social services including with children in foster care, patients diagnosed with eating disorders, victims and survivors of domestic violence, and highly acute patients recovering from suicide attempts, struggling with anxiety and depression. In my work at the partial hospitalization level of care, we also see many patients who struggle due to severe historical trauma which is now impacting their daily functioning.

Through my work in partial hospitalization, I see art therapy utilized as a common modality, primarily with children and adolescents. Art therapy is primarily used in a group setting at PHP.

Art therapy is so vital to the work done with youth in PHP. Many don't have the emotional vocabulary to articulate their thoughts and feelings regarding their behaviors or experiences they have encountered. Utilizing art to bridge that gap has shown tremendous value with sometimes the most challenging patients. A young man who had recently disclosed serious ongoing sexual abuse and had his home life uprooted because of these allegations, was able to express where he feels safest through an art therapy project.

It is important to have professional art therapists as part of our team to provide direction and oversight of best practice to include art therapy into treatment plans. Due to a lack of emotional vocabulary many patients respond to art directed means of expression with ease.

Young patients are able to express joy, gratitude, and acceptance through group based art therapy activities at PHP which we can then use as a bridge to tapping into these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors outside our program. Art therapy interventions create a dialogue that sometimes feels less scary and overwhelming to children, making them more likely to build rapport and open up about their symptoms and struggles with mental health.

Sincerely,

SaraAnn Staley, PLMHP, PCMSW  
Program Therapist

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