



American Music Therapy Association

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AMTA PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

Preamble to *AMTA Professional Competencies*

The American Music Therapy Association has established competency-based standards for ensuring the quality of education and clinical training in the field of music therapy. As the clinical and research activities of music therapy provide new information, the competency requirements need to be reevaluated regularly to ensure consistency with current trends and needs of the profession and to reflect the growth of the knowledge base of the profession. The Association updates these competencies based on what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to perform the various levels and types of responsibilities to practice at a professional level.

In November 2005 the AMTA Assembly of Delegates adopted the *Advisory on Levels of Practice in Music Therapy*. This Advisory, which was developed by the Education and Training Advisory Board, distinguishes two Levels of Practice within the music therapy profession: Professional Level of Practice and Advanced Level of Practice. This Advisory describes the Professional Level of Practice as follows:

A music therapist at the Professional Level of Practice has a Bachelor's degree or its equivalent in music therapy and a current professional designation or credential in music therapy (i.e., ACMT, CMT, MT-BC, or RMT). At this level, the therapist has the ability to assume a supportive role in treating clients, collaborating within an interdisciplinary team to contribute to the client's overall treatment plan.

The *AMTA Professional Competencies* are based on music therapy competencies authored for the former American Association for Music Therapy (AAMT) by Bruscia, Hesser, and Boxhill (1981). The former National Association for Music Therapy (NAMT) in turn adapted these competencies as the *NAMT Professional Competencies* revised in 1996. In its final report the Commission on Education and Clinical Training recommended the use of these competencies, and this recommendation was approved by the AMTA Assembly of Delegates in November 1999. The *AMTA Professional Competencies* has had several minor revisions since its adoption in 1999.

A. MUSIC FOUNDATIONS

1. Music Theory and History
 - 1.1 Recognize standard works in the literature.
 - 1.2 Identify the elemental, structural, and stylistic characteristics of music from various periods and cultures.
 - 1.3 Sight-sing melodies of both diatonic and chromatic makeup.
 - 1.4 Take aural dictation of melodies, rhythms, and chord progressions.
 - 1.5 Transpose simple compositions.
2. Composition and Arranging Skills
 - 2.1 Compose songs with simple accompaniment.

- 2.2 Adapt, arrange, transpose, and simplify music compositions for small vocal and nonsymphonic instrumental ensembles.
- 3. Major Performance Medium Skills
 - 3.1 Perform appropriate undergraduate repertoire; demonstrate musicianship, technical proficiency, and interpretive understanding on a principal instrument/voice.
 - 3.2 Perform in small and large ensembles.
- 4. Functional Music Skills
 - 4.1 Demonstrate a basic foundation on voice, piano, guitar, and percussion.
 - 4.1.1 Lead and accompany proficiently on instruments including, but not limited to, voice, piano, guitar, and percussion.
 - 4.1.2 Play basic chord progressions in several major and minor keys with varied accompaniment patterns.
 - 4.1.3 Play and sing a basic repertoire of traditional, folk, and popular songs with and without printed music.
 - 4.1.4 Sing in tune with a pleasing quality and adequate volume both with accompaniment and a capella.
 - 4.1.5 Sight-read simple compositions and song accompaniments.
 - 4.1.6 Harmonize and transpose simple compositions in several keys.
 - 4.1.7 Tune stringed instruments using standard and other tunings.
 - 4.1.8 Utilize basic percussion techniques on several standard and ethnic instruments.
 - 4.2 Develop original melodies, simple accompaniments, and short pieces extemporaneously in a variety of moods and styles, vocally and instrumentally.
 - 4.3 Improvise on pitched and unpitched instruments, and vocally in a variety of settings including individual, dyad, small or large group.
 - 4.4 Care for and maintain instruments.
- 5. Conducting Skills
 - 5.1 Conduct basic patterns with technical accuracy.
 - 5.2 Conduct small and large vocal and instrumental ensembles.
- 6. Movement Skills
 - 6.1 Direct structured and improvisatory movement experiences.
 - 6.2 Move in a structured and/or improvisatory manner for expressive purposes.

B. CLINICAL FOUNDATIONS

- 7. Therapeutic Applications
 - 7.1 Demonstrate basic knowledge of the potential, limitations, and problems of populations specified in the Standards of Clinical Practice.
 - 7.2 Demonstrate basic knowledge of the causes, symptoms of, and basic terminology used in medical, mental health, and educational classifications.
 - 7.3 Demonstrate basic knowledge of typical and atypical human systems and development (e.g., anatomical, physiological, psychological, social.)
 - 7.4 Demonstrate basic understanding of the primary neurological processes of the brain.
- 8. Therapeutic Principles
 - 8.1 Demonstrate basic knowledge of the dynamics and processes of a therapist-client relationship.
 - 8.2 Demonstrate basic knowledge of the dynamics and processes of therapy groups.
 - 8.3 Demonstrate basic knowledge of accepted methods of major therapeutic approaches.
- 9. The Therapeutic Relationship
 - 9.1 Recognize the impact of one's own feelings, attitudes, and actions on the client and the therapy process.

- 9.2 Establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with clients and team members that are appropriate and conducive to therapy.
- 9.3 Use oneself effectively in the therapist role in both individual and group therapy, e.g., appropriate self-disclosure, authenticity, empathy, etc. toward affecting desired therapeutic outcomes.
- 9.4 Utilize the dynamics and processes of groups to achieve therapeutic goals
- 9.5 Demonstrate awareness of the influence of race, ethnicity, language, religion, marital status, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation on the therapeutic process.

C. MUSIC THERAPY

10. Foundations and Principles

Apply basic knowledge of:

- 10.1 Existing music therapy methods, techniques, materials, and equipment with their appropriate applications.
- 10.2 Principles and methods of music therapy assessment, treatment, evaluation, and termination for the populations specified in the Standards of Clinical Practice.
- 10.3 The psychological aspects of musical behavior and experience including, but not limited to, perception, cognition, affective response, learning, development, preference, and creativity.
- 10.4 The physiological aspects of the musical experience including, but not limited to, central nervous system, peripheral nervous system, and psychomotor responses.
- 10.5 Philosophical, psychological, physiological, and sociological basis of music as therapy.
- 10.6 Use of current technologies in music therapy assessment, treatment, evaluation, and termination.

11. Client Assessment

- 11.1 Select and implement effective culturally-based methods for assessing the client's strengths, needs, musical preferences, level of musical functioning, and development.
- 11.2 Observe and record accurately the client's responses to assessment.
- 11.3 Identify the client's functional and dysfunctional behaviors.
- 11.4 Identify the client's therapeutic needs through an analysis and interpretation of assessment data.
- 11.5 Communicate assessment findings and recommendations in written and verbal forms.

12. Treatment Planning

- 12.1 Select or create music therapy experiences that meet the client's objectives.
- 12.2 Formulate goals and objectives for individual and group therapy based upon assessment findings.
- 12.3 Identify the client's primary treatment needs in music therapy.
- 12.4 Provide preliminary estimates of frequency and duration of treatment.
- 12.5 Select and adapt music, musical instruments, and equipment consistent with the strengths and needs of the client.
- 12.6 Formulate music therapy strategies for individuals and groups based upon the goals and objectives adopted.
- 12.7 Create a physical environment (e.g., arrangement of space, furniture, equipment, and instruments that is conducive to therapy).
- 12.8 Plan and sequence music therapy sessions.
- 12.9 Determine the client's appropriate music therapy group and/or individual placement.
- 12.10 Coordinate treatment plan with other professionals.

13. Therapy Implementation

- 13.1 Recognize, interpret, and respond appropriately to significant events in music therapy sessions as they occur.

- 13.2 Provide music therapy experiences that address assessed goals and objectives for populations specified in the Standards of Clinical Practice.
- 13.3 Provide verbal and nonverbal directions and cues necessary for successful client participation.
- 13.4 Provide models for and communicate expectations of behavior to clients.
- 13.5 Utilize therapeutic verbal skills in music therapy sessions.
- 13.6 Provide feedback on, reflect, rephrase, and translate the client's communications.
- 13.7 Assist the client in communicating more effectively.
- 13.8 Sequence and pace music experiences within a session according to the client's needs and situational factors.
- 13.9 Conduct or facilitate group and individual music therapy.
- 13.10 Implement music therapy program according to treatment plan.
- 13.11 Promote a sense of group cohesiveness and/or a feeling of group membership.
- 13.12 Develop and maintain a repertoire of music for age, culture, and stylistic differences.
- 13.13 Recognize and respond appropriately to effects of the client's medications.
- 13.14 Maintain a working knowledge of new technologies and implement as needed to support client progress towards treatment goals and objectives.
14. Therapy Evaluation
 - 14.1 Design and implement methods for evaluating and measuring client progress and the effectiveness of therapeutic strategies.
 - 14.2 Establish and work within realistic time frames for evaluating the effects of therapy.
 - 14.3 Recognize significant changes and patterns in the client's response to therapy.
 - 14.4 Recognize and respond appropriately to situations in which there are clear and present dangers to the client and/or others.
 - 14.5 Modify treatment approaches based on the client's response to therapy.
 - 14.6 Review and revise treatment plan as needed.
15. Documentation
 - 15.1 Produce documentation that accurately reflects client outcomes and meet the requirements of internal and external legal, regulatory, and reimbursement bodies.
 - 15.2 Document clinical data.
 - 15.3 Write professional reports describing the client throughout all phases of the music therapy process in an accurate, concise, and objective manner.
 - 15.4 Effectively communicate orally and in writing with the client and client's team members.
 - 15.5 Document and revise the treatment plan and document changes to the treatment plan.
 - 15.6 Develop and use data-gathering techniques during all phases of the clinical process including assessment, treatment, evaluation, and termination.
16. Termination/Discharge Planning
 - 16.1 Assess potential benefits/detriments of termination of music therapy.
 - 16.2 Develop and implement a music therapy termination plan.
 - 16.3 Integrate music therapy termination plan with plans for the client's discharge from the facility.
 - 16.4 Inform and prepare the client for approaching termination from music therapy.
 - 16.5 Establish closure of music therapy services by time of termination/discharge.
17. Professional Role/Ethics
 - 17.1 Interpret and adhere to the AMTA Code of Ethics.
 - 17.2 Adhere to the Standards of Clinical Practice.
 - 17.3 Demonstrate dependability: follow through with all tasks regarding education and professional training.
 - 17.4 Accept criticism/feedback with willingness and follow through in a productive manner.
 - 17.5 Resolve conflicts in a positive and constructive manner.
 - 17.6 Meet deadlines without prompting.

- 17.7 Express thoughts and personal feelings in a consistently constructive manner.
- 17.8 Demonstrate critical self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses.
- 17.9 Demonstrate knowledge of and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds.
- 17.10 Treat all persons with dignity and respect, regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, language, religion, marital status, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic status, or political affiliation.
- 17.11 Demonstrate skill in working with culturally diverse populations.
- 17.12 Adhere to all laws and regulations regarding the human rights of clients, including confidentiality.
- 17.13 Demonstrate the ability to locate information on regulatory issues and to respond to calls for action affecting music therapy practice.
- 17.14 Demonstrate basic knowledge of professional music therapy organizations and how these organizations influence clinical practice.
- 17.15 Demonstrate basic knowledge of music therapy service reimbursement and financing sources (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, Private Health Insurance, State and Local Health and/or Education Agencies, Grants).
- 17.16 Adhere to clinical and ethical standards and laws when utilizing technology in any professional capacity.
- 18. Interprofessional Collaboration
 - 18.1 Demonstrate a basic understanding of professional roles and duties and develop working relationships with other disciplines in client treatment programs.
 - 18.2 Communicate to other departments and staff the rationale for music therapy services and the role of the music therapist.
 - 18.3 Define the role of music therapy in the client's total treatment program.
 - 18.4 Collaborate with team members in designing and implementing interdisciplinary treatment programs.
- 19. Supervision and Administration
 - 19.1 Participate in and benefit from multiple forms of supervision (e.g., peer, clinical).
 - 19.2 Manage and maintain music therapy equipment and supplies.
 - 19.3 Perform administrative duties usually required of clinicians (e.g., scheduling therapy, programmatic budgeting, maintaining record files).
 - 19.4 Write proposals to create new and/or maintain existing music therapy programs.
- 20. Research Methods
 - 20.1 Interpret information in the professional research literature.
 - 20.2 Demonstrate basic knowledge of the purpose and methodology of historical, quantitative, and qualitative research.
 - 20.3 Perform a data-based literature search.
 - 20.4 Integrate the best available research, music therapists' expertise, and the needs, values, and preferences of the individual(s) served.

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