

2015 National TR/RT Innovation Survey Results



These results review

- A need for programs that are efficacy based, improve efficiency, and enables client independence
- The most important needs and challenges within TR/RT as expressed by those in the field
- The personal view and perceived views of importance of health for clients/participants

Forward

We began with a single question: How can we improve services for people with disabilities? We soon realized there wasn't a simple answer, but felt that recreational therapy could have a significant impact in this area. Specifically, that bridges can be built between aspects of this field and others that will transform disability services for the better.

Before looking forward, it's best to first reflect on the current state of disability services from the people working within these fields. We set out to accomplish this by creating a survey that centers on Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS), while comparing perspectives of related disability service roles.

By openly sharing the survey data and results we can begin to ask important questions together, such as: What things can we organize to simplify our services while enhancing quality for the client? What are the small things we can start with today that can be replicated by others? I hope the results from this survey elicits more questions like this.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey and for those of you who are kind enough to share the results.

Warmest Regards,

Christine Devereaux, CTRS
Ryan Johnson

Introduction

The Therapeutic Recreation and Disability Support - National Innovation Survey set out to collect information from disability support professionals with a particular focus on Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS). The information collected is intended to act as a point of reference for new ideas and potential improvements to disability support services.

This survey attempted to gather information about the following:

Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support Fields

Section 3: Importance of Health and Wellness for Clients

Section 4: Availability of Resources and Tools

Section 5: Satisfaction of Recreational Therapy

These categories are used to frame the five sections of this review.

The survey was created using Survey Monkey and distributed to anyone in a disability support role through a combination of Facebook, LinkedIn, email and word of mouth. The survey was active for two months (June 5, 2015 - August 5, 2015). After closing the survey and observing the results, this review, accompanying charts, visuals, and data were created. All raw data will be available via download at the end of this article.

The 2015 Therapeutic Recreation and Disability Support - National Innovation Survey collected a total of 245 responses. This review provides basic categorical charts and limited data. It is expected to be a framing for ideas and conversation rather than a source of statistical analysis.

Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

The following questions were asked to determine core demographics of recreational therapy and disability support:

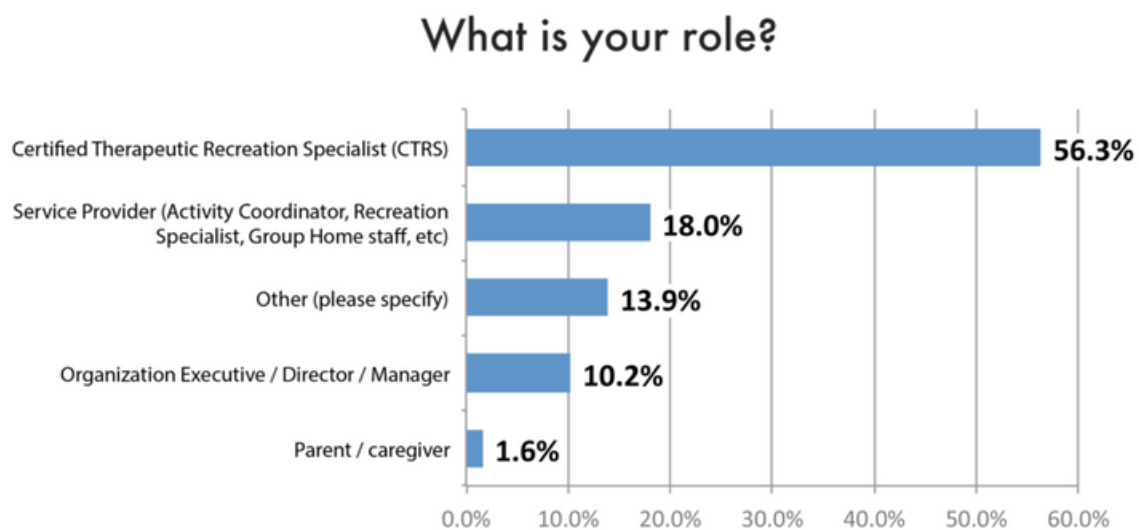
- What is your role?
- With what population do you work?
- In which setting do you currently work?
- In which state do you currently work?

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

This question asked the respondents to choose between the following roles:

- Organization Executive/Director/Manager
- Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)
- Service Provider (Activity Coordinator, Recreation Specialist, Group Home staff, etc)
- Parent or caregiver
- Other (please specify)

This data shows percent total of respondents for each role:



Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

The roles with the most complete data were CTRSs, Service Providers, and Organizational Leaders. Because of this, these roles were filtered to allow comparisons between each other. Below are the total respondents for each of these roles.

138

CTRS

44

Service Provider

25

Organizational
Leader

Charts that are filtered by role, will also have a fourth category, named 'All', which is the total of three roles above. In this case, "Parent or Caregiver" and "Other" roles were filtered out because responses were incomplete and/or too few responses.

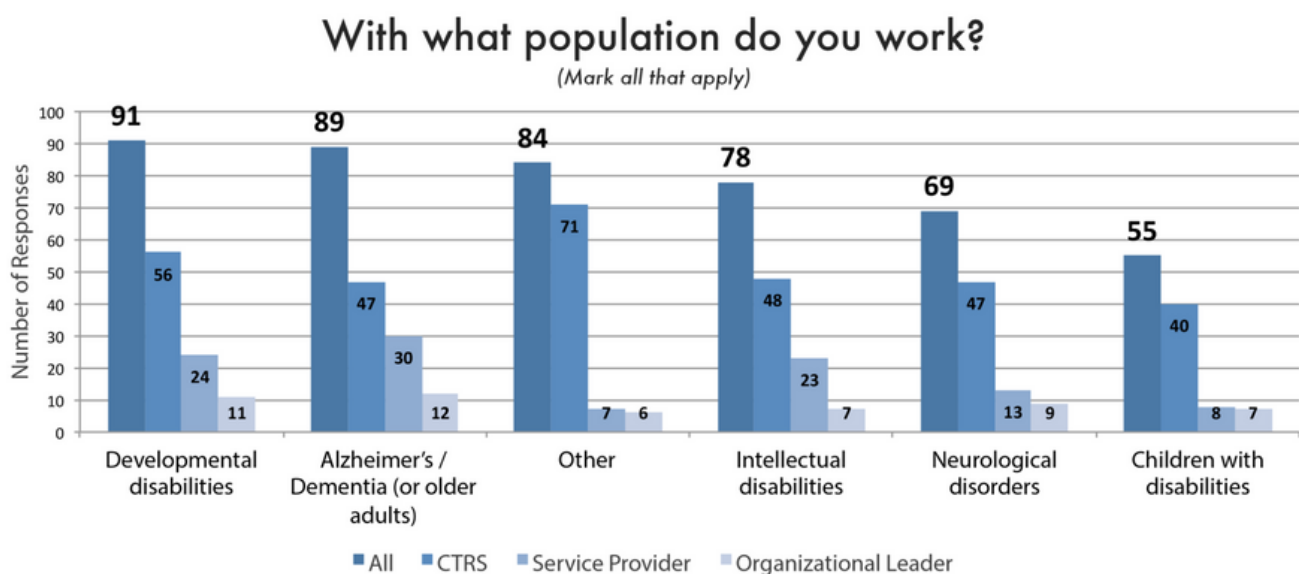
Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

QUESTION 2: WITH WHAT POPULATION DO YOU WORK?

This question asked the respondents to check a box beside all the populations they work with and to mark all that apply. Below were the options to choose from.

- Developmental disabilities
- Alzheimer's / Dementia (or older adults)
- Intellectual disabilities
- Neurological disorders
- Children with disabilities
- Other (please specify)

This data is filtered by role and sorted from highest number of respondents to lowest by the 'All' category:



Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

Respondents were also asked to write in all populations they work with if not listed as an available category. Below is the list of responses when 'Other' was selected and is in order of the highest number of responses to the lowest number of responses.

People with Mental/Behavioral Health Needs = 52 responses

Physical Disabilities = 15 responses

Spinal Cord and Traumatic Brain Injuries = 8 responses

Veterans = 6 responses

At Risk Youth = 4 responses

All Disabilities = 4 responses

Chemical Dependency = 3 responses

Students = 2 responses

For a complete list of 'Other' responses, please click this link: www.changethechallenge.com/national-survey-links

Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

QUESTION 3: IN WHICH SETTING DO YOU CURRENTLY WORK?

This question asked the respondents to select the setting they currently work in from the following options:

Hospital

Community (community centered boards, regional center, day services, etc.)

Long-term care (assisted living, skilled nursing facility, etc.)

School

Service Organization (in-house services, etc.)

Psychiatric Unit

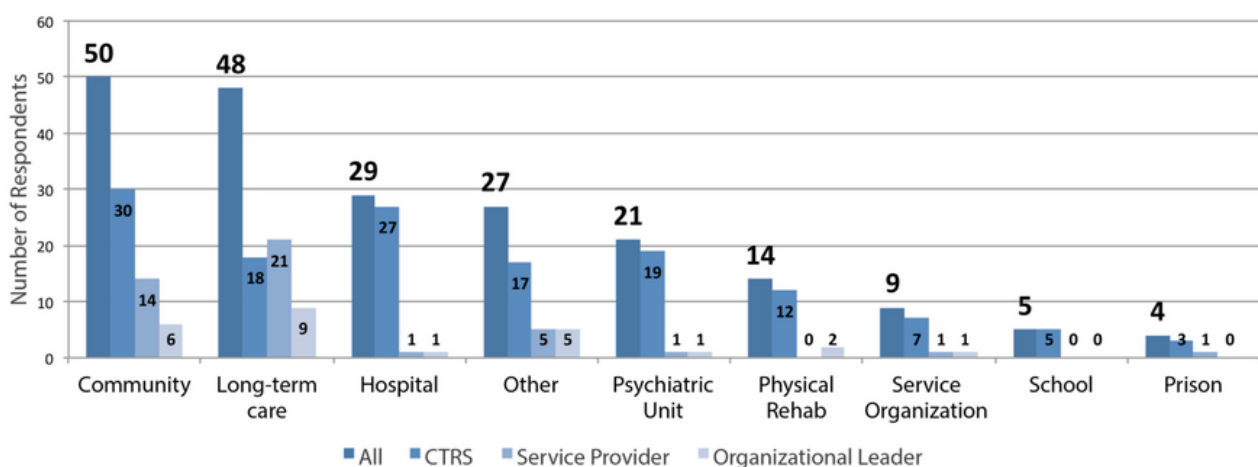
Prison

Physical Rehab

Other (please specify)

This data is filtered by role and sorted from highest number of respondents to lowest by the 'All' category:

In which setting do you currently work?



Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

Respondents were asked to select "Other" and write in the setting where they work if not listed as an available category. Below is the list of those responses and is in order of the highest number of responses to the lowest number of responses.

Parks and Recreation/Camps = 5 responses

Home-Based Therapy = 4 responses

N/A (Retired, Student, or Currently Not Working) = 4 responses

Schools = 2 responses

Equine Therapy = 2 responses

Independent Contractor/Consultant = 2 responses

All Settings = 1 response

Public Health = 1 response

For a complete list of 'Other' responses, please click this link:

www.changethechallenge.com/national-survey-links

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

The next three questions were used to determine what challenges exist in recreational therapy and disability support by having the respondents address problems, needs and challenges they have seen in their role:

What are the underlying PROBLEMS that cause you the most significant challenges? Respondents ranked each selection from 1 -8 with 1 being the most significant and 8 being the least significant. What are your most important NEEDS? Respondents ranked each selection from 1 - 10 with 1 being the most significant and 10 being the least significant.

In your current role, what are your most significant challenges in providing quality service to your clients? List your top 3.

The first two questions asked the respondent to rank preselected problems and needs that are common in recreational therapy and disability support. The third question allowed for open-ended answers in order to capture any problems or needs that were missed.

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS THAT CAUSE YOU THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES?

This question asked the respondents to rank the following common problems of recreational therapy and disability support from 1 to 8:

Quality of Service - Client care and service processes are inconsistent

Motivation of Staff - Staff takes shortcuts and does not put the client first

Health and Wellness of Clients - Clients lack lifestyle options and choices to maintain optimal health

Independence of Clients - Clients lack self-sufficiency skills and ability to make choices themselves

Understaffed - Organization lacks people or resources for proper effectiveness

Communication - Difficult to communicate between staff, organization management, and/or parents and caregivers

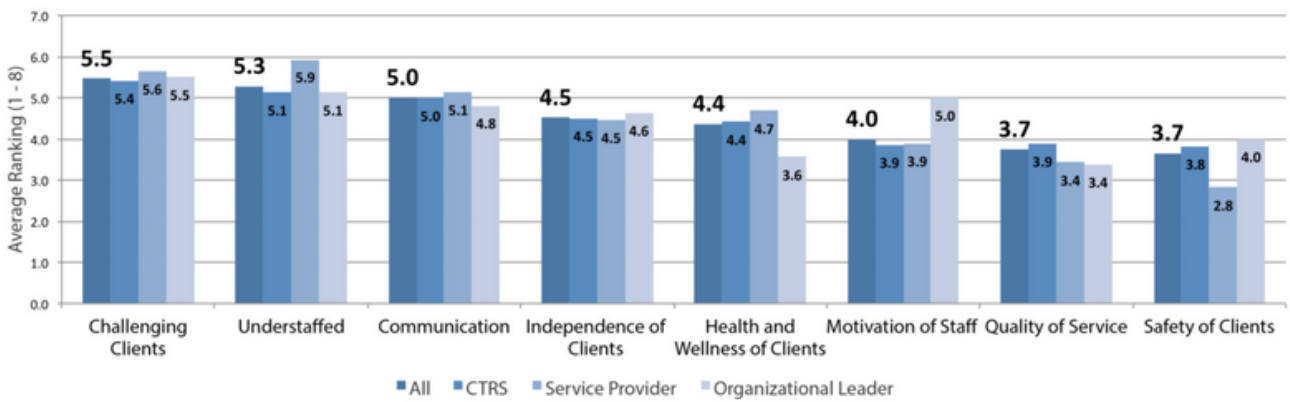
Safety of Clients - Client's safety is at risk due to communication, transportation or financial barriers

Challenging Clients - Clients who have more severe disabilities and/or challenging behaviors

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

This data is filtered by role and sorted from highest average ranking to lowest average ranking by the 'All' category:

What are the underlying PROBLEMS that cause you the most significant challenges?
(in ranked order from 1-8)



*This chart includes 148 respondents
2015 Therapeutic Recreation and Disability Support - National Innovation Survey
www.ChangeTheChallenge.com

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS?

This question asked the respondents to rank the following common needs of recreational therapy and disability support from 1 - 10:

Funding - Need sufficient budget, fundraising and/or managed costs

Documentation - Need standardized and efficient progress notes, behavior tracking, and treatment plans

Training of Staff - Need basic knowledge, ongoing education, and reliable and consistent client care

Internal Support - Need support from supervisors and other departments

Outcome-Based Programs - Need purposeful programs with goals, desired outcomes and efficient tracking and documentation

Resources - Need adequate tools, technology and other resources, including new innovations

Staff Pay - Need sufficient pay for staff

External Support - Need contract services from outside organizations for additional resources

Process Improvement - Need improved service processes for more efficiency and effectiveness of care

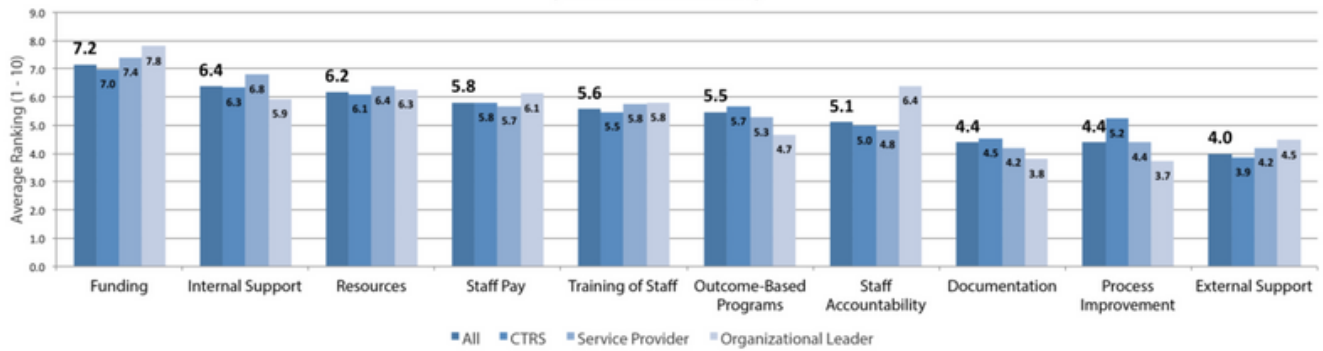
Staff Accountability - Need standard methods of holding staff accountable for responsibilities

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

This data is filtered by role and sorted from highest average ranking to lowest average ranking by the 'All' category:

What are your most important NEEDS?

(in ranked order from 1-10)



*This chart includes 136 respondents
2015 Therapeutic Recreation and Disability Support - National Innovation Survey
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Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

QUESTION 3: IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE, WHAT ARE YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICE TO YOUR CLIENTS?

While Questions 1 and 2 were helpful in ranking problems and needs, the categories were pre-defined. Question 3 was created to capture categories that may have been missed by allowing respondents to write in their top three challenges which are summarized in eight subcategories below. These subcategories were chosen based on their specificity, significance, and intent of this survey and are listed from highest number of responses to the lowest number of responses.

Activities/Programs - 40 responses stated challenges related to new activity ideas and innovative programming, stimulating and meaningful activities, adaptive programs, age-appropriate activities, and activities for different ability ranges.

Time - 34 responses stated challenges in time management and lack of time; and, many respondents stated this negatively affected their quality of services.

Education and Training - 30 responses stated challenges related to education and training of self and co-workers, knowledge of how to adapt programs to client needs and abilities, and lack of knowledge in specialty areas - psychological problems, mixed populations/needs, children, dementia, teens, and autism were listed specifically.

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

Diminishing or Limited Recreational Therapy Positions and/or Services - 24 responses related to limited recreational therapy positions and recreational therapy services. A few examples of challenges include “I’m the only CTRS”, “Hiring and keeping qualified therapists at low salary rates”, and “Not enough recreational therapy staff to meet the needs of our patients.” Responses that stated “understaffed” were not included because “understaffed” was a Problem category in the survey. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed “understaffed” is relating to recreational therapy positions specifically.

Transportation - 13 responses stated transportation challenges such as “Lack of transportation”, “Limited public transportation in (my) area”, and “Transportation for individuals with disabilities.”

Insurance/Billing/Reimbursement - 10 responses stated challenges related to recreational therapy services not being reimbursed by insurance, while related therapies are reimbursed for their services. Responses of “funding” were not included in this subcategory due to the fact “Funding” was a Need category in the survey. Furthermore, the word “funding” is broad and not specific like “insurance”, “billing”, and “reimbursement.”

Data - 5 responses related to challenges with standards of practice in documentation, collecting data, and reporting data for measured outcomes. *Change the Challenge messaged ATRA for an official position of data collection, analytics, and measurements for recreational therapy services. Change the Challenge has yet to hear back from ATRA.

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

Research - 5 responses related to challenges with evidenced-based programs and research in order to validate services. Although there were only 5 total responses related to research, this subcategory is significant to many stated challenges.

There were a variety of challenges listed by respondents that are not captured in the above subcategories. A few examples include marketing, safety, networking with other CTRSs, and space/facilities. For the entire list of ALL individual responses, please click the link below.

www.changethechallenge.com/national-survey-links

Section 3: Importance of Health and Wellness of Clients

The question of perceived importance of health and wellness of clients was included for two main reasons. First, the field of recreational therapy recognizes health and wellness as an essential element of its services. The American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) defines recreational therapy as:

"Recreational Therapy means a treatment service designed to restore, remediate and rehabilitate a person's level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition."

Second, the 2005 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities emphasized health and wellness as its central theme. Here is an excerpt from its summary:

"Developed by the Surgeon General in collaboration with the Department's Office on Disability, it describes the particular challenges to health and wellbeing faced by persons of all ages with disabilities. It places their health squarely among the public health issues at the forefront of research, service delivery, financing, training and education and health care policy today."

Health and wellness of people with disabilities has declined since this Call to Action ten years ago. Looking at obesity rates alone, people with disabilities continue to have higher obesity rates than people without disabilities, according to a 2013 study.

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Section 3: Importance of Health and Wellness of Clients

This question was phrased to ask respondents to rate how much they agree with the following statements:

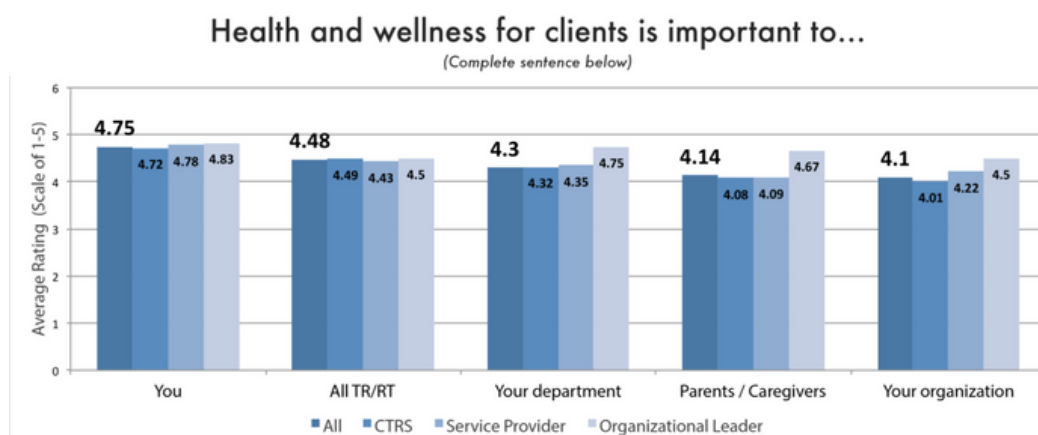
QUESTION 1: HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOR CLIENTS IS IMPORTANT TO...

- ...you.
- ...your department.
- ...your organization as a whole.
- ...the recreational therapy field as a whole.
- ...parents and caregivers.

The respondents were asked to rate each statement on a scale of 1 - 5.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Agree
- = Strongly Agree.

This data is filtered by role and sorted from highest rating to lowest rating by the 'All' category:



Section 4: Availability of Resources and Tools in Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

The following questions asked if there are tools or resources which improve specific aspects of recreational therapy and disability support:

Question 1: Do you have any tools or resources that are successful in...

...educating clients to become more independent?

...improving the efficiency of care?

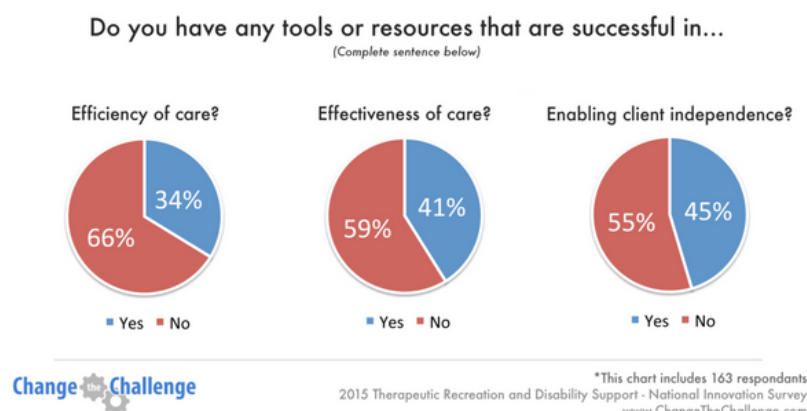
...improving the effectiveness of care?

Question 2: If yes, briefly describe each tool or resource and its value.

Despite limited tools and resources for standards of measuring level of client independence, efficiency of care and effectiveness of care in recreational therapy, each of these questions remain important to the services provided by recreational therapists.

QUESTION 1 RESULTS:

The charts below indicate the percentages of yes and no for each standard of care. Each includes data from all respondents who answered the question:



Section 4: Availability of Resources and Tools in Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

QUESTION 2 RESULTS:

There were 41 responses containing multiple and varying examples of tools and resources. They have been organized into the nine groupings below, listed from highest number of responses to the lowest.

Client Education and Resources - 10 responses fell into this grouping and include the following examples:

Education classes for clients including leisure education, exercise (benefits of exercise), adapted leisure activities, and health education

Adults with autism support group

Individually Developed Standards and Agency-Specific Standards - 8 responses fell into this grouping - 6 for individually developed standards and 2 for agency-specific standards. These standards of care include the individual development of protocols, documentation, curriculum development, and process improvement and include the following examples:

This is a direct quote from a survey respondent: “Because there currently aren’t many tools or resources for Recreational Therapists, I have created my own curriculum, process plans, documentation styles, staff and client education styles, and process improvement plans. I would like a more standardized approach to RT services created.”

Section 4: Availability of Resources and Tools in Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

Evidenced-based protocols

Program evaluation

Agency-Specific Standards - Individual Participation Plans and Client Attainment Scales

Communication - 7 responses fell into this grouping and include the following examples:

E-Newsletters

Networking

Meetings

Accessing interdepartmental staff

Self-Directed Learning - 5 responses fell into this grouping and include the following examples:

Internet

Computer

Books and textbooks

National Disease/Diagnosis websites

Standardized Tools/Resources - 4 responses fell into this grouping and include the following examples:

Leisure Competence Measure (1 respondent)

“The LCM is a standardized instrument designed to measure outcomes in recreational therapy.” - Idyll Arbor

WRAP (1 respondent)

This is used in mental and behavioral health settings. “The Wellness Recovery Action Plan® or WRAP®, is a self-designed prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to get well, stay well and make their life the way they want it to be.” - WRAP

Section 4: Availability of Resources and Tools in Recreational Therapy and Disability Support

“Snoezelen or controlled multisensory environment (MSE) is a therapy for people with autism and other developmental disabilities, dementia or brain injury. It consists of placing the person in a soothing and stimulating environment, called the "Snoezelen room".”
- Wikipedia

Perception of Care Survey (1 respondent)

Although a specific Perception of Care Survey was not listed, there are several standardized options.

Training - 4 responses fell into this grouping and include the following examples:

Training for parents and on-going staff development and training

Continuing Education - 2 responses fell into this grouping and include the following examples:

Conferences and Workshops

Evidenced-Based Programming - 1 response fell into this grouping

To download the complete list of write-in answers, click this link:
www.changethechallenge.com/national-survey-links

Impressions of Tools and Resources Results

Specific tools and resources capable of directly improving and holding accountable the following standards of care were not found for the majority of recreational therapists or disability support professionals in these areas:

- Educating clients to become more independent
- Improving the efficiency of care
- Improving the effectiveness of care

The data shows the majority of respondents do not have tools or resources that are successful in efficiency of care (66%), effectiveness of care (59%), or educating clients to become more independent (55%). These numbers highlight a need for supplemental resources, technology or otherwise, that would improve each standard of care.

Common and accessible standards do exist in related service industries, including: physical therapy, occupational therapy, applied behavior analysis, and speech language pathology. Although one recreational therapy tool was listed (Leisure Competence Measure), more tools from other professional fields were listed and still, more therapist-created tools are being used and viewed as helpful.

When filtering results to the CTRS role alone, 55% of respondents did not have tools for success in educating clients to become more independent. This is significant because it is a formal stated purpose of the recreational therapy field, and therefore a core job function of recreational therapists. Here is the official definition of TR/RT from ATRA:

“Recreational Therapy means a treatment service designed to restore, remediate and rehabilitate a person’s level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition.”

IMPRESSIONS OF TOOLS AND RESOURCES RESULTS

While gaps in efficiency and effectiveness of care are great opportunities for improvement, educating clients to become more independent is a crucial aspect of recreational therapy and is a necessary consideration for change, discussion, and innovation.

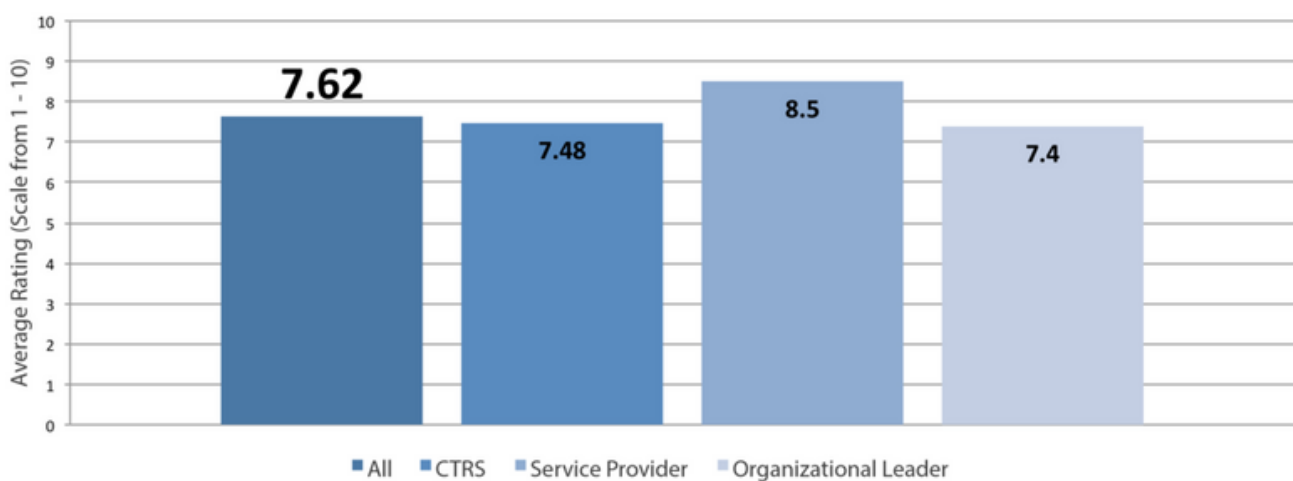
SECTION 5: SATISFACTION OF RECREATIONAL THERAPY

The following question was added later in the survey distribution therefore the total number of respondents was low.

Question: What is your overall satisfaction with the recreational therapy field?

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a 1-10 scale with 1 being low and 10 being high. It is important to note this question was added The overall consensus is a 7.6 out of a perfect score of 10:

What is your overall satisfaction with the recreational therapy field?
(On a scale from 1 - 10)



CONCLUSION

The data in this survey is limited but functional in that it starts a conversation that can occur in your role, department, organization, and field of service.

Our initial question was: How can we improve services for people with disabilities? To better inform this question, the following information was gathered:

Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

Section 2: Challenges of Recreational Therapy and Disability Support Fields

Section 3: Importance of Health and Wellness for Clients

Section 4: Availability of Resources and Tools

Section 5: Satisfaction of Recreational Therapy

Looking forward, it is unlikely a single tool or resource is capable of solving all needs and challenges addressed. We believe significant improvements will only occur within an ecosystem of disability support - a diverse network of people working in collaboration to drive innovations and improvements alongside existing models.

Donna Williams, author of "Autism: An Inside-Out Approach" captures this well:

“To get any all-round service, people with (disabilities) don’t need a High Street of competing shops, they need a department store where each department is aware of what the others offer and points people in the direction of other services which complement their own.”

So, what do you think?

CONCLUSION

Thank you again for those who participated in the survey and for those who shared the survey - we couldn't have done this without you! We also encourage you to join the conversation and email us your thoughts. Thank you!

Be Well,

Christine Devereaux, CTRS
Ryan Johnson