

Recreational Therapists

SOC: 29-1125 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$60,280 Median Salary	16,100 Employment	+3.0% Growth Rate
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■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Bachelor's degree

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 8.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.
This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■ Work-Life Balance

8.6/10 - Excellent work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.4/10	Investigative	8.6/10
Artistic	4.8/10	Social	9.0/10
Enterprising	5.4/10	Conventional	6.2/10

■ Top Skills Required

Communication skills, Compassion, Leadership skills, Listening skills, Patience, Resourcefulness

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Recreational Therapists plan, implement, and oversee **therapeutic recreational activities to improve the physical, emotional, and social well-being of patients**. They use arts, sports, games, and community activities to support rehabilitation, recovery, and overall quality of life. Their work is critical in healthcare, rehabilitation centers, and community wellness programs.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy working with people, promoting wellness, and designing engaging therapeutic activities.

What Do Recreational Therapists Do?

These professionals assess patient needs, develop activity plans, and facilitate programs to enhance health and well-being.

Common responsibilities include:

- Evaluating patient abilities, interests, and therapeutic goals
- Planning and organizing recreational activities tailored to individual or group needs
- Leading sessions in arts, sports, games, or outdoor activities
- Monitoring patient progress and adjusting activities as needed
- Collaborating with healthcare providers, therapists, and family members
- Maintaining records of patient participation and outcomes
- Educating patients on the benefits of recreational therapy

Key Areas of Recreational Therapy

Therapists may specialize in certain settings, populations, or therapeutic approaches:

- Physical Rehabilitation: Activities to improve mobility, coordination, and strength
- Mental Health and Social Skills: Programs to enhance social interaction and coping strategies
- Geriatric Therapy: Activities designed for older adults to maintain function and engagement
- Community and Recreational Programs: Facilitating leisure programs in community or recreational centers
- Adaptive and Inclusive Therapy: Designing activities for patients with disabilities or special needs

Skills and Abilities Needed

Recreational therapists combine interpersonal, organizational, and therapeutic skills.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires formal education and practical experience:

- Bachelor's Degree (minimum): Recreational therapy, therapeutic recreation, or related field
- Clinical Internship or Practicum: Hands-on experience in healthcare or rehabilitation settings
- Certification (required in many states): Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)
- On-the-Job Training: Developing activity planning and patient management skills
- Continuing Education: Staying current on therapeutic methods, healthcare practices, and safety protocols

Where Do Recreational Therapists Work?

They are employed in organizations that provide health, rehabilitation, and wellness services:

- Hospitals and Rehabilitation Centers
- Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities
- Community and Recreational Centers
- Mental Health and Behavioral Health Programs

- Schools, Camps, and Specialty Programs

Work environments include therapy rooms, recreational facilities, hospitals, outdoor spaces, and community centers.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires creativity, patience, and interpersonal skills. Therapists must adapt activities to patient abilities, motivate participants, and coordinate with healthcare teams.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy helping others improve well-being through activities
- Are creative and adaptable
- Have strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Can work with diverse populations and abilities
- Want a career promoting health, recovery, and social engagement

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in health sciences, psychology, or recreational therapy
- Volunteer or intern in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, or community programs
- Develop skills in activity planning, leadership, and patient engagement
- Learn about adaptive equipment and therapeutic techniques
- Explore certification programs and continuing education opportunities in recreational therapy

Recreational therapists enhance patient well-being by designing and leading therapeutic activities that promote physical, emotional, and social health.