

## **What career can you pursue with a degree in Therapeutic Recreation?**

**Veterans Administration:** Over 100,000 soldiers are returning to the United States from the current war with injuries ranging from traumatic brain injury, amputation, spinal cord injury, burns, and post traumatic stress disorder. Recreational therapists work directly with the wounded soldiers at the rehabilitation hospital (i.e. Walter Reed Medical Center, Brook Army Medical Center) to assist them in returning to active duty and/or introduce adaptive sports and recreational opportunities. The Veterans Administration has doubled the number of recreational therapists they are hiring with starting pay ranging from \$47,000 to \$79,000 per year salary.

**Inclusion Specialist:** The main responsibilities of the inclusion specialist are to advocate for youth and/or adults to have the opportunity to engage in the continuum of recreation services provided by community agencies. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America employees inclusion specialists at various clubs to promote programs for all children.

**Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation:** The recreational therapist will meet with patients to assess specific skills and abilities to be addressed during the rehabilitation process. Personalized treatment plans are developed to address physical, social, and emotional needs in relationship to leisure while working on functional rehabilitation goals. This includes community outings, holiday parties, co-treatment with other therapies (physical, occupational, speech, etc.), pet therapy, as well as other treatment modalities. Conditions individuals are diagnosed with include, but are not limited to traumatic brain injury, amputation, stroke, and spinal cord injury.

**Acute Care:** Pain management, relaxation, and focusing on improving functional ability through the use of leisure are the primary focuses of the recreation therapist who works in acute care. Often the recreational therapist works at bedside providing one on one recreation sessions. This includes, but is not limited to: burn units, cardiac, traumatic brain injury, cystic fibrosis, and high-risk pregnancy.

**Mental Health Services:** Recreational therapists work both in-patient and out-patients services in mental health services. Working collaboratively with social work and psychologists the recreational therapists focuses on increasing ones ability to live independently as possible. This often includes drug and alcohol counseling and finding alternatives to unhealthy leisure choices. Issues addressed by the recreational therapist include, but are not limited to: suicide, homelessness, depression, anxiety, personality disorders, hallucinations, and other issues associated with mental health.

**Adaptive Sports Coordinator:** With the current increase in community based adaptive sports and recreation programs several communities now have agencies (both governmental and nonprofit) that provide services to individuals who may need adaptive equipment to engage in their leisure pursuits. Recreational therapists complete leisure assessments to determine what programs and adaptive equipment will meet the needs of the individuals they serve. The recreational therapist may also collaborate with a local hospital to promote rehabilitation across the lifespan.

**Special Education Programs:** Recreational therapists who work in schools help counselors, teachers and parents address the special needs of students. Recreation services, covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, includes: assessment of leisure functioning, therapeutic recreation services, recreation programs in schools and community agencies, and leisure education.

**The Aging Population:** Advances in health care and technology have shown an increase in persons over the age of 60. The new “senior citizen” is more active than ever and interested in starting new leisure interests. Many are still skiing, hiking, rafting, traveling, running marathons, and starting second careers. Jobs in the area of the aging population include community based recreation programs, intergenerational programs, assisted living and long term care.

**Long Term Care:** Six out of ten recreational therapists are employed in long term care. This area of health care encompasses a broad range of services for individuals with disabilities who need assistance with activities of daily living. The recreational therapist may provide activities that focus on memory, fall risk reduction, sensory stimulation, and teaching care providers how to provide independent recreation activities to family members.