

STATE OF NEW YORK

5901

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 3, 2025

Introduced by Sen. LANZA -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to defining the practice of recreational therapy and establishing procedures for licensure of recreational therapists and requirements for continuing education for recreational therapists

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new article 158 to
2 read as follows:

3 ARTICLE 158
4 RECREATION THERAPY

5 Section 8100. Introduction.

6 8101. Definitions.

7 8102. Practice of recreation therapy and use of title "recre-
8 ation therapist".

9 8103. State board for recreation therapy.

10 8104. Requirements for a professional license.

11 8105. Limited permits.

12 8106. Exempt persons.

13 8107. Special conditions.

14 8108. Mandatory continuing competency.

15 § 8100. Introduction. This article applies to the profession of recre-
16 ation therapy. The general provisions for all professions contained in
17 article one hundred thirty of this title apply to this article.

18 § 8101. Definitions. As used in this article:

19 1. "Practice of the profession of recreation therapy" means the
20 continual functional evaluation of the client, the planning and imple-
21 mentation of a program of recreation and/or leisure activities, the

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 development and utilization of a treatment program, and/or consultation
2 with the client, family, caregiver or organization in order to restore,
3 develop or maintain adaptive skills, and/or performance abilities
4 designed to achieve maximal physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and
5 mental functioning of the client using recreation and leisure inter-
6 ventions. It is a treatment program designed to promote health and well-
7 ness; restore, remediate and/or rehabilitate function and independence;
8 and reduce/eliminate any limitations caused by an illness or disabling
9 condition. The treatment program shall be rendered on the approval or
10 referral of a physician, nurse practitioner or other health care provid-
11 er acting within their scope of practice pursuant to this title.
12 Prevention, wellness, education, adaptive sports and recreation and
13 related services shall not require a referral. However, nothing
14 contained in this article shall be construed to permit any licensee
15 hereunder to practice occupational therapy, medicine or psychology,
16 including psychotherapy or to otherwise expand such licensee's scope of
17 practice beyond what is authorized by this chapter.

18 2. "Board" means the state board for recreation therapy established
19 pursuant to section eighty-one hundred three of this article.

20 § 8102. Practice of recreation therapy and use of title "recreation
21 therapist". No person shall practice or hold oneself out as being able
22 to practice recreation therapy in this state unless the person is
23 licensed, authorized or exempt under this article. Nothing in this para-
24 graph shall be construed to prohibit students enrolled in board-approved
25 schools or courses in recreation therapy from performing services that
26 are incidental to their respective courses of study or supervised work.
27 The board shall adopt rules relative to schools or courses allowing
28 students to practice under this subdivision. Only a person licensed
29 under this article shall use the title "licensed recreation therapist"
30 or "therapeutic recreation specialist".

31 § 8103. State board for recreation therapy. A state board for recre-
32 ation therapy shall be appointed by the board of regents on the recom-
33 mendation of the commissioner for the purpose of assisting the board of
34 regents and the department on matters of professional licensing and
35 professional conduct. The board shall be composed of not less than five
36 licensed recreation therapists, and one member of the public who is not
37 licensed under this title. An executive secretary to the board shall be
38 appointed by the board of regents on recommendation of the commissioner.

39 § 8104. Requirements for a professional license. To qualify for a
40 license as a recreation therapist, an applicant shall fulfill the
41 following requirements:

42 1. file an application with the department;

43 2. have satisfactorily completed an approved recreation therapy
44 curriculum in a baccalaureate, master's, or doctorate program or a post-
45 baccalaureate certificate from an institution acceptable to the depart-
46 ment;

47 3. a. have completed a field experience in recreation therapy which
48 was under the supervision of qualified supervisors and where supervision
49 and experience shall be satisfactory to the board of recreation therapy
50 and in accordance with the commissioner's regulations, or;

51 b. have a supervised recreation therapy work experience in which
52 supervision and experience shall be satisfactory to the board of recre-
53 ation therapy and in accordance with the commissioner's regulations;

54 4. pass an examination satisfactory to the board of recreation therapy
55 and in accordance with the commissioner's regulations;

56 5. be at least twenty-one years of age;

1 6. be of good moral character as determined by the department; and
2 7. pay a fee of one hundred forty dollars to the department for admis-
3 sion to a department conducted examination, if applicable, and a fee of
4 seventy dollars for each re-examination, and a fee of one hundred
5 fifty-five dollars for each triennial registration period.

6 § 8105. Limited permits. The following requirements for a limited
7 permit shall apply to all professionals licensed or certified pursuant
8 to this article.

9 1. The department may issue a limited permit to an applicant who meets
10 all qualifications for licensure, except the examination and/or experi-
11 ence requirements, in accordance with regulations promulgated therefor.

12 2. Limited permits shall be for one year; such limited permits may be
13 renewed, at the discretion of the department, for one additional year.

14 3. The fee for each limited permit and for each renewal shall be
15 seventy dollars.

16 4. A limited permit holder shall practice only under supervision as
17 determined in accordance with the commissioner's regulations.

18 § 8106. Exempt persons. This article shall not be construed to affect
19 or prevent the following, provided that no title, sign, card or device
20 shall be used in such manner as to tend to convey the impression that
21 the person rendering such service is a licensed recreation therapist:

22 1. a licensed physician from practicing such physician's profession as
23 defined under article one hundred thirty-one and article one hundred
24 thirty-one-B of this title;

25 2. qualified members of other licensed or legally recognized
26 professions from performing work incidental to the practice of their
27 profession, except that such persons may not hold themselves out under
28 the title recreation therapist;

29 3. a student from engaging in clinical practice as part of an approved
30 program in recreation therapy; or

31 4. an employee of a federal, state or city agency from using the title
32 or practicing as a recreation therapist insofar as such activities are
33 required by such employee's salaried position and the use of such title
34 shall be limited to such employment.

35 § 8107. Special conditions. Any nonexempt person practicing a profes-
36 sion to be licensed pursuant to this article shall apply for a license
37 of said profession within one year of the effective date of the speci-
38 fied profession except:

39 1. if such person does not meet the requirements for a license estab-
40 lished within this article, such person may meet alternative criteria
41 determined by the board of recreation therapy to be the substantial
42 equivalent of such criteria; or

43 2. if such person meets the requirements for a license established
44 within this article, except for examination, and has been certified or
45 registered by a national certifying or registering body having certif-
46 ication or registration standards acceptable to the commissioner, the
47 department shall license without examination.

48 § 8108. Mandatory continuing competency. 1. a. Each licensed recre-
49 ation therapist shall register triennially with the department to prac-
50 tice in the state and must comply with the provisions of the mandatory
51 continuing competency requirements prescribed in subdivision two of this
52 section, except as provided in paragraphs b and c of this subdivision.
53 Those who do not satisfy the mandatory continuing competency require-
54 ments shall not be authorized to practice until they have met such
55 requirements, and they have been issued a registration certificate,
56 except that they may practice without having met such requirements if

1 they are issued a conditional registration pursuant to subdivision three
2 of this section.

3 b. Recreation therapists shall be exempt from the mandatory continuing
4 competency requirement for the triennial registration period during
5 which they are first licensed. Adjustment to the mandatory continuing
6 competency requirements may be granted by the department for reasons of
7 health of the licensee where certified by an appropriate health care
8 professional, for extended active duty with the armed forces of the
9 United States, or for other good cause acceptable to the department
10 which may prevent compliance.

11 c. A licensed recreation therapist not engaged in practice, as deter-
12 mined by the department, shall be exempt from the mandatory continuing
13 competency requirement upon the filing of a statement with the depart-
14 ment declaring such status. Any licensee who returns to the practice of
15 recreation therapy during the triennial registration period shall notify
16 the department prior to reentering the profession and shall meet such
17 mandatory continuing competency requirements as shall be prescribed by
18 regulations of the commissioner.

19 2. a. During each triennial registration period an applicant for
20 registration as a recreation therapist shall complete a minimum of thir-
21 ty hours of learning activities which contribute to continuing compe-
22 tence, as specified in subdivision four of this section, provided
23 further that at least twenty hours shall be in areas of study pertinent
24 to the scope of practice of recreation therapy. With the exception of
25 continuing education hours taken during the registration period imme-
26 diately preceding the effective date of this section, continuing educa-
27 tion hours taken during one triennium may not be transferred to a subse-
28 quent triennium.

29 b. Thereafter, a licensee who has not satisfied the mandatory continu-
30 ing competency requirements shall not be issued a triennial registration
31 certificate by the department and shall not practice unless and until a
32 conditional registration certificate is issued as provided for in subdivi-
33 sion three of this section.

34 3. The department, in its discretion, may issue a conditional regis-
35 tration to a licensee who fails to meet the continuing competency
36 requirements established in subdivision two of this section, but who
37 agrees to make up any deficiencies and complete any additional learning
38 activities which the department may require. The fee for such a condi-
39 tional registration shall be the same as, and in addition to, the fee
40 for the triennial registration. The duration of such conditional regis-
41 tration shall be determined by the department but shall not exceed one
42 year. Any licensee who is notified of the denial of registration for
43 failure to submit evidence, satisfactory to the department, of required
44 continuing competency learning activities and who practices without such
45 registration may be subject to disciplinary proceedings pursuant to
46 section sixty-five hundred ten of this title.

47 4. As used in subdivision two of this section, "acceptable learning
48 activities" shall mean activities which contribute to professional prac-
49 tice in recreation therapy, and which meet the standards prescribed in
50 the regulations of the commissioner. Such learning activities shall
51 include, but not be limited to, collegiate level credit and non-credit
52 courses, publications in professional journals and professional develop-
53 ment programs; such learning activities may be offered and sponsored by
54 national, state and local professional associations and other organiza-
55 tions or parties acceptable to the department, and any other organized
56 educational and technical learning activities acceptable to the depart-

1 ment. The department may, in its discretion and as needed to contribute
2 to the health and welfare of the public, require the completion of
3 continuing competency learning activities in specific subjects to
4 fulfill this mandatory continuing competency requirement. Learning
5 activities must be taken from a sponsor approved by the department,
6 pursuant to the regulations of the commissioner.

7 5. Recreation therapists shall maintain adequate documentation of
8 completion of acceptable continuing competency learning activities and
9 shall provide such documentation at the request of the department. Fail-
10 ure to provide such documentation upon request of the department shall
11 be an act of misconduct subject to the disciplinary proceedings pursuant
12 to section sixty-five hundred ten of this title.

13 6. The mandatory continuing competency fee shall be forty-five dollars
14 for recreation therapists, shall be payable on or before the first day
15 of each triennial registration period, and shall be paid in addition to
16 the triennial registration fee required.

17 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after
18 it shall have become a law.