

## MAHCP Career Profile

# Recreation Coordinators

(also known as  
Recreation Therapists)

By Alexandra Smirnos-North, BRMCD  
Recreation Coordinator  
Health Sciences Centre

### What does a Recreation Coordinator do?

Recreation Coordinators provide therapeutic interventions to assist patients to reintegrate back into the community, and recover both physically and emotionally from their illness and/or disability. These interventions contribute to successful discharges and meet patient's recovery goals. We are educators of healthy living and wellness.

We have a holistic approach to healthcare. We focus on the whole person and incorporate all six domains of a person into our therapies. The six domains are: cognitive, emotional, physical, social, spiritual and vocational.

Recreation Coordinators work on interdisciplinary teams and collaborate with other health care professionals on treatment goals and interventions. We assess patients and develop individualized care plans. Recreation Therapy interventions can take a variety of formats that may include but are not limited to; groups, one to one and outings.

Although we wear many hats, our four main areas of practice are:

- **Therapeutic recreation interventions:** to improve functional abilities, wellbeing, and facilitate independence in positive leisure pursuits
- **Community re-integration:** to provide assistance and support in removing physical and psychological barriers that impede participation in recreation programs and services offered in the community
- **Leisure education:** to enhance and promote lifelong recreation skills and attitudes
- **Recreation participation:** to promote health and personal growth through leisure and recreation experiences

In addition to these main functions we also supervise and coordinate volunteers, run special events and work on program management committees.

Recreation Coordinators work in a variety of areas in health care settings but primarily in acute care facilities. We work in a broad range of clinical setting such as; acute mental health, physical medicine, eating disorders, addictions, spinal cord injury and amputee services.

### Education

Recreation Coordinators are required to have a 4 year Bachelors Degree in Recreation from an accredited university. Some also possess a Masters degree in Therapeutic Recreation.

### Challenges

One of the greatest challenges we face as Recreation Coordinators is the perception that "we are the fun people" or "that our role is primarily for entertainment". While entertainment can be an outcome from participating in recreation therapy programs it is not our main objective. For example, our objectives for running a craft group might be to develop socialization skills, work on concentration, skill development and improve hand function.

Another challenge our profession faces is that patient populations are becoming more acute and our patient case loads continue to grow. This is challenging because our practice is patient-centered and tailored to meet each individual patient's needs.

Despite these challenges I believe that as a group of professionals we are very dedicated to the work we do and work hard every day to provide our patients with the highest level of care! We do what we do because we care about the people we work with and want to make our communities stronger and healthier.



MAHCP Members from HSC Recreation Therapy