

Expressive/ creative arts therapies are a new collection of counseling professions. In Massachusetts, all three of the AMA professions that fall within this category are regulated as licensed professional counselors. Because of the different methods and treatments that they use, there could be an argument that they should be, at least from a statutory perspective, treated differently. The three healthcare professions that the AMA recognizes within this group are art therapists, dance/movement therapists, and music therapists.

Expressive/creative arts therapists basically use their particular specialty (in this case art, dance/movement, or music) to treat or aid in the treatment of particular patients. As such, they are usually treated as a type of counselor. Still, some states individually recognize the specific practitioners as their own subset. For example, art therapists are recognized by five states (Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, and Wisconsin). Other states, while not explicitly recognizing expressive/creative arts therapists, find other ways to acknowledge and support them. For example, with regard to music therapists, Arizona, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Indiana, and Michigan all have some form of Medicaid coverage for musical therapy. In addition, Medicare, in certain circumstances, also provides coverage for certain forms of musical therapy.

Massachusetts may be able to benefit from providing a subset to professional licensed counselors. This, like many of the other opportunities for new professions, provides another level of care. This allows more patients to be treated, and with the further specialization in counseling techniques, may allow patients to be treated more effectively. Within the commonwealth, there are already educational programs in place to train these individuals. For art therapy, there are two universities (Springfield College and Lesley University) that offer programs. For dance therapy, Lesley University is the only school that offers a degree in dance therapy. For musical therapy, however, there are three schools: Anna Marie College, Berklee College of Music, and Lesley University. All three offer programs in musical therapy.

While it may not be practical to license each profession individually, an expressive/creative arts therapist may be a benefit to the healthcare system.