ARTS IN HEALTH
IMPROVING OUR NATION’S HEALTH THROUGH THE ARTS

ACTION NEEDED
We urge Congress to:

• Direct the Veteran’s Health Administration in the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Military Health System in the Department of Defense to expand cost-effective creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs designed to address health, well-being, and resilience across the military continuum.

• Support funding for creative arts in healthcare research priorities within the federal agencies involved with the Arts and Human Development Interagency Task Force. These include the National Institutes of Health, Administration on Aging, and the Department of Education.

• Support the Veteran’s Health and Benefits Improvement Act of 2013 (S.944) and the Veterans and Armed Forces Health Promotion Act (H.R. 3516) to improve access to complementary and alternative medicine interventions, including creative arts therapies.

TALKING POINTS
Creative arts in healthcare includes the professional disciplines of art therapy, music therapy, dance therapy, drama therapy, and poetry therapy, as well as artist-directed applications of visual, literary and performing arts, and design within a wide variety of healthcare and community settings for therapeutic, educational, and expressive purposes. These nationally credentialed therapists and artists are dedicated to improving our nation’s health and healthcare experience by providing quality, cost-effective services that achieve positive outcomes for patients, families, and caregivers.

How Veterans, Active Military, and Their Families Are Served Well by Creative Arts in Healthcare

• Creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs and services within Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals and on military bases will provide for increased access to affordable, outcomes-based healthcare and successful treatment options for veterans and military personnel who do not respond to traditional interventions.

• The National Intrepid Center for Excellence at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, which includes art therapy, music therapy, and a writing program for veterans with PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury, demonstrates the successful integration of creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs in critical healthcare programming.

• The Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program (SARP) in San Diego, CA is a Navy-sponsored treatment program featuring dance/movement therapy focused on enhancing military readiness through effective prevention and rehabilitation of substance abuse and dependence-related issues for active duty personnel.

• Operation Oaktree, a program of the Institute for Therapy through the Arts, Music Institute of Chicago, provides creative arts therapies services to military children and families throughout the cycle of deployment to foster communication, strengthen family resilience, facilitate smooth transitions, and enhance coping strategies.

Why Support for Research Is Necessary

• Existing studies on the creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs in health and wellness demonstrate the positive impact these services have on patient outcomes and healthcare cost savings. We must expand on this foundation of research through:
  ✓ Support for larger scale studies.
  ✓ Collaboration among stakeholders.
  ✓ Promotion of study results to encourage expansion of services to the general public.

• The Arts and Human Development Interagency Task Force can provide the strategic support to coordinate a research agenda for the creative arts in healthcare by highlighting evidence-based practices, organizing the distribution of funding opportunities, and facilitating technical assistance support.
Current research demonstrates that creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs can contribute to the following positive outcomes when services are integrated into medical treatment and community prevention and wellness programs:

- Reduced lengths of hospital stays
- Decreased need for multiple medical visits
- Reduced reports of pain and anxiety related to illness and invasive treatment
- Improvements in quality of life
- Reduced levels of depression and stress
- Decreased need for use of sedatives during medical procedures
- Decreased use of medical interventions covered by Medicare among the aging

Research citations available in the Arts in Health Field-at-a-Glance document

How Access to Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Helps Veterans

- The Veteran’s Health and Benefits Improvement Act of 2013, S.944, introduced by Sen. Sanders (VT) and Veterans and Armed Forces Health Promotion Act, H.R. 3516, introduced by Rep. Ryan (OH) would provide for the creation of Centers of Innovation for CAM in healthcare research, education, and clinical activities along with pilot programs for the creation of CAM Centers within VA Medical Centers.

- Creative arts therapies, including art therapy, dance/movement therapy, and music therapy, are defined as CAM interventions under Mind-Body Medicine by the National Institutes of Health (NH) National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM).

- Numerous CAM interventions have been shown to be effective for symptomatic relief related to insomnia, anxiety, pain, and various somatic presentations associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

- Clinical program evidence demonstrates that the creative arts therapies can effectively address the proposed legislation’s focus areas of mental health, pain management, and wellness promotion.

- Group session treatments with creative arts therapies services allow for increased socialization, family engagement, and emotional support.

- Creative arts therapies offer a non-threatening, alternative, and motivating means of communication and expression for individuals who are hesitant to participate in other treatment approaches.

BACKGROUND

Economic analyses and cost studies show a positive trend in the use of creative arts therapies and their impact on containing healthcare costs. Research confirms that the creative arts therapies enhance coping and improve response to treatment, thereby reducing the need for hospital care and pain medication and their associated costs. In addition, access to creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs reduces patients’ level of depression and anxiety, contributes to patient satisfaction, and improves providers’ recruitment and retention rates.

Creative arts therapists and artists in healthcare work in diverse settings across a wide spectrum of populations, literally serving persons from cradle to grave. Besides private for-profit and nonprofit health facilities, settings for this work include, but are not limited to, hospice programs, long-term care facilities, mental health programs, schools, rehabilitation treatment centers, special needs camps, disaster response teams, psychiatric forensic units, veterans’ facilities, prisons, community centers, wellness programs, and military bases.

Despite historical beginnings in veterans hospitals during World War II, inclusion in federal programs such as the Older Americans Act and previously funded research grant awards through agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, there is a need to expand opportunities for creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs in healthcare research and treatment so that more Americans can access these cost-effective services. Creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs have the potential to positively impact the healthcare spending concerns, quality of care issues, and veteran healthcare needs currently facing our nation. An investment in the creative arts in healthcare is an investment in America’s health.