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To: Sara Montauti, MPH
Healthcare Quality Safety Branch
Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section
Department of Public Health

Submitted by: Kat Lee, MA, LCAT, RDT-BCT

katcslee@gmail.com

(440) 781-9693

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kat-cs-lee/>

Drama Therapy Scope of Practice

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Description of the Request

Definition of Drama Therapy

Drama therapy is the intentional use of drama and theater processes to achieve therapeutic goals. Drama therapy is an active and experiential approach to facilitating change as therapists invite

projective play, storytelling, purposeful improvisation, and performance in order to rehearse desired behaviors, practice being in relationship, and find greater flexibility in life roles.¹

Drama therapy means the integrated use of psychotherapy, theater, and creative processes to treat individuals with mental, emotional or behavioral disorders that interfere with mental health or adequate functioning. Drama therapists plan, implement, and evaluate treatment interventions designed to meet developmental, behavioral, mental, emotional, social needs of individuals or groups.

Drama therapists work in diverse settings, including: schools, medical and psychiatric hospitals, elder care, correctional facilities, immigrant and refugee services, private practice, and elsewhere. Drama therapists are trained to work with populations with needs across the clinical spectrum, including but not limited to: neurodiversity; substance use; eating disorders; LGBTQ+ experiences; gerontology; medical illness; trauma; military service; and severe and persistent mental illness.

Request for Licensure

Connecticut currently licenses art therapists and music therapists. The other two primary branches of creative arts therapy—dance/movement therapy and drama therapy—remain unregulated. Prior to 2017, creative arts therapists were able to pursue licensure as licensed professional counselors providing they could demonstrate training equivalency. However, in 2017 the Connecticut Counseling Association ratified a statute to exclude professionals who did not hold master's degrees with the words “psychology,” “counseling,” or “marriage and family therapy” in the title, regardless of training equivalency.² Therefore, there now exists a gap in regulation and professional recognition for half of creative arts therapy providers, who are recognized neither as licensable creative arts therapists nor as professional counselors. Likewise, anyone holding a license as a creative arts therapist (LCAT) from New York State cannot be granted reciprocity in the state of Connecticut.

Public Health and Safety Benefits

The primary benefits of licensure are (a) to protect consumers by differentiating drama therapy services from the general use of drama in healthcare and educational settings; and (b) ensuring that only qualified professionals are promoting themselves in embodied therapeutic practices.

There is a great deal of interest in mind/body and action oriented methods of therapy, but many who offer these services do not have adequate training or practice standards to manage the complex responses and processes that are involved in mind/body integrated psychotherapeutic work. Drama therapists have rigorous training and supervision, but their work is currently unregulated in CT. A quick search on *Psychology Today* demonstrates that many therapists in CT consider themselves

¹ [What is DramaTherapy?](#)

² [Testimony of The Connecticut Counseling Association in support of SB 903 An Act Concerning Educational and Professional Standards for Professional Counselors, 2017](#)

qualified to practice expressive arts therapy³ and somatic therapy⁴ without providing any evidence of formal certification. If social workers and counselors have indicated that expressive arts therapies are enough of a separate method to be disqualified under their licensure, the reverse should be true as well. It is essential that consumers who wish to engage in vulnerable processes involving embodied, expressive therapies have informed consent regarding their practitioner's training and credentials.

Impact of Request on Public Access to Health Care

The 2024 State of Mental Health in America report⁵ ranked states based on prevalence of mental illness and rates of access to care. With New York and New Jersey rated #1 and #2 respectively for adult mental health care, Connecticut ranked #8, making it the least accessible state for adult mental health care in the tri-state area. Connecticut ranked #9 for treatment access. There are 220 individuals who need care for every one mental health provider in the state.

Despite having equivalently rigorous standards of practice, drama therapists are unable to serve individuals in Connecticut in any institution which requires licensure for mental health professionals, as almost all do to protect the safety of the consumer. Although state representatives acknowledge that we are in dire need of more mental health providers,⁶ the reality is that qualifications for licensure have only become more stringent.

This gatekeeping excludes highly qualified people from being able to serve the public, even during the current mental health crisis. The result is that dance/movement and drama therapists are excluded from the majority of work in schools, hospitals, and other settings which require licensure.

Current Requirements for Drama Therapy Certification

Drama Therapy Competencies for Graduate Training

Drama therapists are required to demonstrate proficiency in the following competencies as part of their graduate training:⁷

- Ethical Standards and Practice
- Research
- Drama Therapy Theories and Core Practices
- Group Therapy
- Human Growth and Development
- Performance, Theater Perspectives, and Aesthetics

³ [Search for "Expressive arts therapy" in CT](#), *Psychology Today*

⁴ [Search for "Somatic Therapy" in CT](#), *Psychology Today*

⁵ [2024 State of Mental Health in America Report](#)

⁶ ["Amid youth mental health crisis, these 157 CT schools lack critical services, task force finds"](#) from *The Hour*, 2022

⁷ [NADTA Knowledge Competencies](#)

- Helping Relationships
- Cultural Humility, Equity, and Diversity
- Assessment

To read about each competency in more detail, visit <https://www.nadta.org/knowledge-competencies>.

Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) Credential

The Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) is a Master's level credential requiring coursework in psychology and drama therapy, experience in theater, a supervised internship, and work experience. RDTs are board certified in the practice of drama therapy and follow the North American Drama Association Code of Ethics. The requirements are as follows:⁸

1. *Master's or Doctoral degree in Drama Therapy or related field.*
2. *Internship Experience*
 - a. A minimum of 300 direct-client contact hours with a minimum of 30 hours of supervision
 - b. An additional 470 hours of additional internship hours (including, but not limited to, staff meetings, preparing for sessions, contact notes, reviewing professional materials, and other administrative work)
 - c. A minimum of two (2) different populations (e.g., severe and persistent mental illness, adolescent mental health, elder care, etc.)
3. *Theatre Experience*
 - a. 500 hours of drama/theatre experience. This may include acting, directing, and/or improvisational work studied or performed in a college, community, or professional setting.
4. *Paid Experience*
 - a. 1000 hours of paid experience as a drama therapist, supervised by a Registered Drama Therapist, credentialed creative arts therapist, or credentialed mental health professional or special educator.
5. *Advanced Clinical Training*
 - a. 500 hours of additional training/work experience. This may include:
 - i. Additional hours of work experience over and above the 1000 required hours.
 - ii. Additional hours of clinical training in drama therapy or a related therapeutic field. This can include workshops, conferences, post-graduate institutes, practica, institutes, or apprenticeship programs.
 - iii. Up to 100 hours of personal psychotherapy within the last 5 years.
 - iv. Up to 100 hours participation in a Playback Theater troupe, provided supervision includes how Playback Theater can be used or is being used in a drama therapy context.

Board Certified Trainer (BCT) Credential

⁸ [Registered Drama Therapist Requirements](#), NADTA

The BCT has worked as a Registered Drama Therapist in the field for a minimum of five years and has mentoring experience. BCTs are responsible for training, teaching, and supervising individuals who aspire to become RDTs.

Known Previous Scope of Practice Requests

Drama therapy joined with the dance/movement therapy licensure taskforce in 2023 to pursue licensure for both professions. We received support from the following representatives through personal correspondence: Rep. Mitch Bolinsky, Rep. McCarthy Vahey, and Rep. Liz Linehan. In 2025, Rep. Morin Bello provided the drama therapy taskforce instructions for formally submitting this scope to the Department of Public Health.

Anticipated Economic Impact of the Request on the Health Care Delivery System

Excluding qualified drama therapists decreases competition for mental health practitioners, thereby preserving higher costs and fewer options for consumers. Board licensure practices can contribute to an establishment of monopoly, raising prices for consumers.⁹ The 2015 White House report found that more restrictive licensing laws lead to significantly higher prices in 9 out of 11 studies reviewed.¹⁰ In 2024, 18% percent of CT adults who reported experiencing two weeks or more of mentally unhealthy days each month were not able to see a provider due to cost and 10% did not have insurance that covers mental health.¹¹

Virtually all clinical job postings in CT require a mental health license. This creates a closed market in which drama therapists cannot compete even if their coursework and hours of postgraduate supervised experience align with Clinical Licensed Art Therapist, Licensed Music Therapist, or License Professional Counselor standards. Additionally, drama therapists are unable to apply for insurance reimbursement, decreasing accessibility and affordability for the consumer.

For a comparison of qualifications between drama therapy and other mental health professions, see Appendix.

Regional and National Trends in Licensure

New York

Drama therapists in New York State have been licensed as Licensed Creative Arts Therapists (LCATs) since 2006.¹² The LCAT requirements are as follows:

- A master's or higher degree in a program of creative arts therapy or its equivalent

⁹ [Occupational Licensure Under Attack](#), Barger, 1975

¹⁰ [Occupational Licensing: A Framework for Policymakers](#), the Department of the Treasury Office of Economic Policy, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Department of Labor, 2015

¹¹ [2024 State of Mental Health in America Report](#)

¹² [LCAT Advocacy Coalition](#)

- Passed a state-approved exam or assessment
- Completed at least 1,500 hours of clinical experience under supervision of a qualified, licensed mental health professional

The LCAT scope of practice is as follows:

By guiding patients to create and reflect on art and the artistic process, creative arts therapists help people increase awareness of self and others, cope with the symptoms of stress, illness and trauma, and enhance cognitive abilities. They help their patients improve self-esteem, develop more effective communications skills and relationships, gain insight into patterns of behavior, and create new options for coping with problems.

Creative arts therapists use assessment instruments and mental health counseling and psychotherapy to identify, evaluate and treat dysfunctions and disorders for the purpose of providing appropriate creative arts therapy services. Creative arts therapists help people with chronic illnesses, substance abuse problems, and physical or developmental disabilities; learning disabilities and other mental health needs. ([NY State Department of Education](#))

New Jersey

Drama therapists in New Jersey were instrumental in the founding of the Board of Creative Arts and Activities Therapies to oversee dance/movement, music, art, and drama therapies.¹³ Following a 2019 bill,¹⁴ the New Jersey Taskforce has advocated for joint licensure for drama and dance/movement therapists (LCDT— Licensed Clinical Drama and Dance/Movement Therapist).¹⁵

The LCDT scope of practice for drama therapy is as follows:

“Drama therapy” means the integrated use of psychotherapeutic principles, theater and creative processes to further the emotional, physical, cognitive, and social well-being of the individual. As a behavioral health discipline, the application of fundamental mental health, psychological, developmental, and mind/body principles are synthesized in an experiential process in order to: (1) facilitate human development and adjustment throughout the lifespan; (2) identify and assess clients with mental, emotional or behavioral disorders that interfere with mental health or adequate functioning in order to implement therapeutic intervention to meet developmental, behavioral, mental and emotional needs; (3) conduct assessment for the purposes of evaluation and establishing treatment goals and objectives; and (4) plan, implement and evaluate treatment interventions designed to meet developmental, behavioral, mental, and emotional needs for individuals or groups. ([New Jersey Legislature](#))

¹³ [Board of Creative Arts and Activities Therapies](#)

¹⁴ [P.L. 2019, c.273 \(A1220 1R\)](#)

¹⁵ [NADTA: Licensure in US.](#)

Impact on Other Professions

Drama therapy's specificity in scope and relatively small number of practitioners should create healthy but not unreasonable competition with existing mental health professionals, particularly because it is not covered by insurance. The drama therapy licensure effort has support from Dr. Rebecca Arnold, director of the Art Therapy graduate program at Albertus Magnus, where this requestor (Kat Lee) has served as an adjunct professor. Drama therapists have been working collaboratively with dance/movement therapists (DMTs) to attain licensure since 2023, with full support from the DMT taskforce.

See Appendix for a letter of support from psychologist Dr. Chelsea Morales, Student Athlete Mental Health Clinician at UCONN.

Current Impact on Drama Therapy Practice

The Post Traumatic Stress Center in New Haven was among the most well-known postgraduate trainers and employers of drama therapists. Run by drama therapist and psychologist Dr. David Johnson, it was home to the non-profit *Miss Kendra* school-based programming to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).¹⁶ The program was featured in the award-winning movie *Resilience* (2016).¹⁷ Dr. Johnson employed drama therapists to engage in rigorous clinical practice and training in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. Drama therapists came to the Post Traumatic Stress Center from all over the country and the world to practice and train. However, without their own licenses, many have since left the state because they are virtually unemployable elsewhere in Connecticut.

Connecticut is close to one of the primary drama therapy graduate programs at New York University. However, we are unable to recruit drama therapists from this program due to the lack of opportunity available in CT. According to the White House's 2015 report on occupational licensing, lack of interstate mobility especially impacted young professionals.¹⁸

If other mental health licenses in CT are too stringent to include drama therapists, *and* organizations in CT will not hire an unlicensed mental health practitioner even if registered with their national certifying body, then drama therapy must obtain its own licensure in order to attract recent graduates and young professionals.

¹⁶ [Miss Kendra Programs](#)

¹⁷ [Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope](#)

¹⁸ [Occupational Licensing: A Framework for Policymakers](#), the Department of the Treasury Office of Economic Policy, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Department of Labor, 2015

Appendix

Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern,

As a clinical psychologist, I had the pleasure of working alongside several drama therapists for 4 years. Prior to my work, I had little to no knowledge about the field of drama therapy, but I was quickly acquainted with the value and healing potential of their work. I found my drama therapist colleagues to be extremely collaborative, not neglecting the importance of diagnosis and treatment planning, but using nuanced, unique, and creative ways to help clients heal. Their work was incredibly meaningful and transformative. I felt fortunate to be able to bear witness as well as learn so much.

Dr. Chelsea Morales, Psy.D.



chelsea.morales@uconn.edu

Licensure Qualifications: Side-by-Side Comparison with Other Credentials

	LPC Counseling	LCSW Social Work	RDT Drama Therapy	ATR Art Therapy	LCAT (NY) Creative Arts Therapy
Educational Requirements	MA or doctoral degree	MA or doctoral degree	MA	MA and <u>board certification</u>	MA or doctoral degree
<i>MA Subject</i>	Social work, marriage and family therapy, counseling or psychology	Social work	Drama therapy or related field	Art therapy or related field	Creative arts therapy
<i>Coursework</i>					
human growth and development	X	x	X	X	X
psychopathology		x	X	X	X
social and cultural foundations	X	x	X	X	
counseling theories and techniques or helping	X	x	X	X	

relationships,					
group dynamics	X	x	X	X	X
career and lifestyle development	X				
appraisals or tests and measurements for individuals and groups	X		X	X	X
research and evaluation	X	x	X	X	X
professional orientation	X	x	X	X	X
additional specialization	Not required	Program dependent	500 hrs theatre experience; Drama therapy theories	18 hrs studio art; 30 hrs art therapy	Theories in creative arts therapy
fieldwork//practicum/ internship	700 hrs	Program dependent	800 hrs	700 hrs	varies
Graduate Hours	60	60	60	60	48
Postgraduate supervised experience	3000 hours	3000 hours	1500 hours	1500 hours	1500 hours
Exam	NCE or NCMHCE	ASWB	N/A	ATCBE	Case Narrative Exam

Signatures of Support

Email Address	First Name	Last Name	Zip Code	Are you a drama therapist?	Please type your full name, which will serve as an electronic signature.
nankin926@gmail.com	Michelle	Nankin	02021	No. I am an allied professional (retired).	Michelle R Nankin
aap487@nyu.edu	Ashley	Perryman	11216	No.	Ashley Perryman
cameronleighbwade@gmail.com	Cameron	Wade	91406	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Cameron Wade
katobale@gmail.com	Barbara	Rodriguez	06479	No. I am an allied professional (retired).	Barbara Matilde Rodriguez
rodriguez.54.barbara@gmail.com	Juan	Rodriguez	44094	No. I am an allied professional (retired).	Juan Rodriguez
mh51@nyu.edu	Maria	Hodermarska	11231	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Maria Hodermarska

m_florestal@yahoo.com	Marjorie	Florestal	94511	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Marjorie Florestal
offcentersuite309@gmail.com	Kate	Hurd	10036	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Kate Hurd
jennleigh2008@gmail.com	Jennifer	Bailey	22963-2407	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Jennifer Bailey
meg.sknight@gmail.com	Megan	Svarich-Knights	N2H4Y7	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Megan Svarich-Knights
annamorganrich@gmail.com	Anna	Rich	04843	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Anna Rich
antonieta.dellicarpini@gmail.com	Antonietta	Delli Carpini	19087	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Antonietta Delli Carpini
camyr@mta.ca	Christine	Mayor	R3L1B6	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Christine Mayor
renee.pitre@gmail.com	Renee	Pitre	06053-2403	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) in CT.	Renee Pitre
kwood@tpgroup2.com	Kathryn	Wood	22304	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Kathryn Wood, LGPC, P-RDT
CraigHaen@gmail.com	Craig	Haen	10603	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Craig Haen
singer679@yahoo.com	Jennifer	Zarin-Nickman	10024	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Jennifer Zarin-Nickman
bilgrad@gmail.com	Jessica	Bilgrad	66502	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Jessica Helene Bilgrad
castleberryrachel@gmail.com	Rachel	Castleberry	01748	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Rachel Castleberry
isabelleemalone@gmail.com	Isabel-Lee (IZI)	Malone	19050	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Isabel-Lee Malone, RDT/BCT
kmvrtdt@gmail.com	Krista	Verrastro	21136	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Krista Verrastro

sro253@nyu.edu	Sarah	Olsen	06840	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) in CT.	Sarah Olsen
SONDRA.MALLING@GMAIL.COM	Sondra	Malling	60630	No.	Sondra H. Malling
KLONGNYC@gmail.com	Kristin	Long	10011	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Kristin Long
av1084@nyu.edu	Atara	Vogelstein	10024	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Atara Vogelstein, LCAT
sheilarubin@sbcglobal.net	Sheila	Rubin	94611	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Sheila Rubin
amy.tichy@gmail.com	Amy	Tichy	56560	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Amy Tichy
agv246@nyu.edu	Annalissa	Vicencio	10011	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Annalissa Vicencio
mizuho@dramaforhealing.com	Mizuho	Kanazawa	07605	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Mizuho Kanazawa
nalonni.madden@gmail.com	NaLonni	Madden	90712-1924	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Nalonni Madden
mckechnieb@verizon.net	Barbara	McKechne	08816	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Barbara McKechne
tami.gatta@gmail.com	Tami	Gatta	11001	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Tami Michelle Gatta
creativekinections@gmail.com	Brooke	Campbell	08054	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Brooke Campbell
darcirburch@gmail.com	Darci	Cohorst	72704	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Darci Burch Cohorst
ccw@carolinacreativewellness.com	Barbara	Kaynan	27613	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Barbara Kaynan
alexandra.devin@gmail.com	Alexandra	Devin	12508	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Alexandra S. Devin, LCAT, RDT
c.burke789@gmail.com	Caroline	Burke	11232	Yes, I am studying to become a drama	Caroline Burke

				therapist/working toward my RDT.	
elgrumley1@gmail.com	Elizabeth	Grumley	11103	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Elizabeth Grumley
governmentaffairs@nadta.org	Tim	Reagan	20901	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Timothy J. Reagan
healtoriseva@gmail.com	Angelle	Cook	20186	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Angelle Cook
anna.v.beck@gmail.com	Anna	Beck	84774	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Anna Beck
sdbailey@ksu.edu	Sally	Bailey	66502	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Sally Bailey
tkcubbal+dt@gmail.com	Tracy	Cubbal	44087	Yes, I am studying to become a drama therapist/working toward my RDT.	Tracy K. Cubbal
morgangeisert@gmail.com	Morgan	Geisert-Klein	22963	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Morgan Geisert-Klein
mbriggs@ksu.edu	Melissa	Briggs	66610	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Melissa Briggs
kathrynschmitt@gmail.com	Kathryn	Schmitt	11105	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Kathryn Schmitt
sheilarubin@sbcglobal.net	Sheila	Rubin	94611	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Sheila Rubin
ethics@nadta.org	Adam	Reynolds	11372	Yes, I am a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) outside of CT.	Adam Reynolds