

# NCTRC NEWSLETTER

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2002 EDITION

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## A Message from Peg Connolly, Ph.D., CTRS

This is the last message I will write to you as Executive Director of NCTRC. On January 1, 2003, Bob Riley, Ph.D., CTRS will assume the role of Executive Director. I know the Council will be in great hands under the direction of Dr. Riley. He brings to the job extensive experience in the profession and with NCTRC.

As I reflect on my privilege to work with NCTRC over the past 16 years, there is a great deal to be proud about in the profession and in regard to our credential. Thousands of volunteer CTRSs and excellent NCTRC staff have

worked toward the advancement of our credential and, thus, our profession.

I am humbled by all we have accomplished and anxious to continue work to gain even more recognition for therapeutic recreation services. The thing that keeps me going is a focus on "WHY" we seek to improve our qualifications and recognition of our credential. It is not to pat ourselves on the back, but to stand up for our consumers.

I ask you all to keep focused on the mission to protect the consumer. We need to be willing to expect higher standards of

ourselves and new applicants. If it improves services to consumers, then I do not believe it is too much to ask.

Until we demand more of ourselves, as professional CTRSs, we cannot expect the respect from other colleagues and professionals. The more we seek excellence in our services the more folks will notice that therapeutic recreation services are important in health care today. So, consider the challenge to place more emphasis on providing effective services.

I wish to express my thanks to my staff and the Board of NCTRC. I have had many more chal-

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## NCTRC Announces New Executive Director

by Janice Elich Monroe, Ph.D., CTRS, Ithaca College

The Board of Directors for the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification would like to announce that Dr. Robert Riley, CTRS will begin his tenure as Executive Director of NCTRC on January 1, 2003. Dr. Riley, is currently serving as Dean, Divisions of Social Sciences and Professional

Studies and Chair of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Green Mountain College in Vermont.

His portfolio includes a vast array of publications and presentations on standards of practice, quality management, and test development. Bob is not new to NCTRC. He has served as a member

of the Board of Directors and was intimately involved in the job analysis and test development work of NCTRC. His contributions to NCTRC and the Therapeutic Recreation Profession are numerous and we feel very excited that he has agreed to serve as our next Executive Director.

*(Continued on page 2)*

*The registered trademarks "NCTRC<sup>®</sup>", "National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification<sup>®</sup>" and "CTRS<sup>®</sup>", and the trademark "Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist<sup>™</sup>", "Certified Therapeutic Recreation Assistant<sup>™</sup>", and "CTRA<sup>™</sup>" are owned by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification.*

## NCTRC, ATRA and NTRS: The States Recognition Project

The American Therapeutic Recreation Association(ATRA), the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC), and the National Therapeutic Recreation Society(NTRS) are pleased to announce the establishment of the State Recognition Project. The purpose of the State Recognition Project is to work collaboratively in order to have quality professional practice recognized and valued by the general public, policy makers, and professional colleagues, in all environments. The purpose of the States' Recognition Project is to provide leadership, advocacy resources, and technical assistance to enable state recognition of professionals as qualified and competent service providers across all practice settings.

These efforts began in July of 2001 when the three organizations came together in Charleston, South Carolina to begin collaborative efforts on behalf of Recreational Therapists and the Therapeutic Recreation Profession. Each or-

ganization was represented by their Executive Directors, President/Chairperson, and three appointed individuals who have considerable knowledge and experience in state recognition efforts. Representatives included the following individuals:

### ATRA Representatives

Diane Etzel Wise, President 2000-01

G. T. Thompson, President 2002-03, Treasurer and Public Policy Team Member

Ray West, ATRA Past President  
Pamela Griffin, States Initiatives Team Leader

Ann D. Huston, Executive Director

### NTRS Representatives

John McGovern, President 2000-2001

Candy Ashton Shaeffer, President 2001-2002

Anne Simonsen, NTRS's Representative to the NRPA Board of Trustees

Marcia Carter, Past President

Rikki Epstein, Executive Director

### NCTRC Representatives

Jan Monroe, Chair of the Board of Directors 2001-2003

Karen Wenzel, Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors 2001-2003

Sandra Negley, Treasurer of the Board of Directors 2001-2003

Karen Luken, Past Chair of the Board of Directors

Peg Connolly, Executive Director

During this landmark event the organizations established a strategic work plan for state recognition efforts. To facilitate the process, an independent consultant, Fran Lowe from Collaborative Decisions, Inc. lead the group through the development of a strategic planning process utilizing a computer assisted facilitated approach that included the development of a vision, mission, and one, two, and five year goals. The Board of Directors for each organization reviewed and respectfully approved the Strategic Plan and agreed to fund first year efforts during their respective board meetings in the

*(Continued from page 1)*

### ***New Executive Director***

Please stop by at our Annual Meeting at the ATRA Annual Conference in Keystone, Colorado to welcome Bob aboard.

**The Search:** The national search for a new NCTRC Executive Director began with the process of sending all CTRSs a postcard inviting qualified candidates to apply for the position. This resulted in requests for 28 applications. The Search Committee was very pleased with the quality of the final applicants.

A competency based screening tool was used to screen the applicants and interviews were scheduled. As Chair of the Board of Directors I would like to thank all current and past members of the Board of Directors who contributed to a seamless transition.

**NCTRC Wishes Dr. Peg Connolly a Fond Farewell:** After serving NCTRC for 16 years, Dr. Peg Connolly has decided to step down from her position as Executive Director beginning on December 31, 2002. During her tenure as the first, full-time Executive Director of NCTRC, Dr. Connolly liter-

ally moved the organization from card board boxes and hand written certificates to an organization with over 17,000 certificants. Her excellent management of Council resources has helped the organization progress from a small certification program to a well-recognized credentialing program which now requires an objective and reliable national exam. Moving to computer based mastery examination in 2001 showed another dramatic leap of growth for the organization as it uses the highest standards and technology for the profession.

## Raising the Bar: Understanding Certification Titles vs. Job Titles

by Janice Elich Monroe, Ph.D., CTRS, Ithaca College

The NCTRC Board of Directors and Staff focus on responding to the questions and concerns of certified professionals and the professional organizations (ATRA & NTRS). Oftentimes questions related to the proper use of the CTRS credential arise. One such question has been, "How can I best represent my professional status as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) and use this information in my agencies job descriptions and job classifications systems?" It is very important to distinguish the difference between a job title and a certification title.

What do the credentials "CTRS" and "Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist" mean? They tell consumers and employers that you have met the minimum standards for professional practice, as identified by NCTRC. They also indicate that you have been authorized (licensed) by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification ("NCTRC") to use these credentials.

Only NCTRC can award the CTRS to individuals who meet and maintain minimum standards for competent practice in therapeutic recreation. These standards are

established by NCTRC based on current research on the National Job Analysis for Therapeutic Recreation, which is also the basis for the national, standardized certification exam for the CTRS.

Many of you have worked hard to ensure that your employers and agencies recognize the CTRS and Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist credentials. Unfortunately, NCTRC is now seeing an increase in *unauthorized uses of these marks in job titles*. When these credentials are used as job descriptions and titles, those uses infringe upon NCTRC's trademark. This is true even if the job is performed by an NCTRC certificant. It is impossible to distinguish between authorized uses of these credentials by certified personnel and unauthorized uses by agencies and employers in job titles for positions that are not necessarily held by NCTRC certificants.

Agencies and employers should not be identifying job positions as CTRS and Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. These are certification credentials, not job titles! Although certification by NCTRC may be a requirement for a recreational therapy position, the position's title should never be the

NCTRC credential.

The title "Recreational Therapist" is identified in the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook*. Use of the "Recreational Therapist" job title, whenever possible, could help to ensure that recreational therapy is recognized as a separate and distinct field of practice.

In order to protect NCTRC's valuable trademarks (and to protect consumers of TR services) every use of NCTRC's certification marks "CTRS" and "Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist" must be authorized by NCTRC. Currently, NCTRC only approves of uses of these marks to indicate certification. Potentially confusing similar designations, should also be avoided. We often see potentially confusing similar designations used by non-certified individuals who wish to imply that they are certified by NCTRC. Such use is potentially harmful to consumers. Potentially confusing similar designation also risks diluting NCTRC's valuable trademark rights.

A CTRS can carry a wide range of job titles that can include but are not limited to: activity therapist, director of recreational

### 2002 Certificant Meeting

Each Fall, NCTRC holds an annual meeting for Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists at the professional conferences of the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) and the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS). Our official meeting this year will be held at the

ATRA Annual Conference in Keystone, Colorado on Sunday, September 22, 2002 from 12:30 to 1:50 pm at the Keystone Conference Center.

We will also hold a meeting for CTRSs at the annual institute NTRS in Tampa, Florida, October 18, 2002 at 2:00 PM - 3:15 PM at the Hyatt Regency in Tampa.

The annual meetings with certificants provide valuable informa-

tion regarding current activities of NCTRC, its Board of Directors, Committees and Staff. We have many exciting projects underway that we want to tell you about, so we hope you will attend our meeting if you plan to attend either of these national conferences.

It is important for you, as an active CTRS, to come to these meetings to express your ideas about NCTRC's vision, mission

## NCTRC Revises CTRS Recertification Standards

Over the past two years, the NCTRC Standards Hearing Committee (SHC) worked diligently to revise the CTRS Recertification Standards. The Committee examined trends in recertification review and input on the standards from various sources. The Committee then submitted recommended changes to the Board of Directors who approved the revised Recertification Standards in April 2002.

The revised Recertification Standards will go into effect December 31, 2002. The new standards will be in effect for new certificants and any CTRS who recertifies after December 31, 2002. Any CTRS on a recertification cycle which began between December 1997 and December 31, 2002 may continue to follow the current recertification standards (or utilize the new ones) until their current five-year recertification cycle has been completed.

The following specific changes have been made and are reflected in the revised Recertification Standards:

### **Recertification Options:**

NCTRC has eliminated the system of components and there will now be two options by which a CTRS may recertify: (a) complete at least 480 hours of professional experience in therapeutic recreation and complete 50 hours of professional-level continuing education; or (b) pass the national certification exam during the last year of their recertification cycle.

**Professional Experience Requirement** The minimum hours of professional experience have been increased to 480 hours over the five-year recertification cycle.

**Continuing Education Requirement:** The minimum requirement has not been changed and remains at 50 hours of continuing education over the five-year period.

The revised recertification standards provide definitions of terms on many of the concepts and requirements of recertification. It is believed this information will help to clarify the expectations for recertification and, thus, make the process more understandable for certificants.

**Professional Publications and Presentations:** The number of hours of professional presentation and publications has been increased from 20 hours to 25 hours. If a CTRS chooses the option to complete work experience and 50 hours of the continuing education, then up to 25 of those 50 hours may be earned through professional presentations and publications.

**Recertification Cycle:** No changes were made in the length of the recertification cycle. Certificants will continue to have a five-year cycle. Each CTRS will submit an annual maintenance renewal and a recertification application prior to the end of the five-year cycle. Recertification applications may be submitted no earlier than 12 months before the certification expiration date.

**Recertification Interpretive Guidelines** have been added to the recertification standards to assist CTRSs. These new guidelines are printed below:

### **Academic Courses for Credit:**

Courses taken at a college or university for academic credit and documented by an official transcript. Course content must be linked to the therapeutic recreation knowledge areas delineated in the current NCTRC Job Analysis study.

**Activity Skill Session/Course:** the focus of learning is on the experiential aspects of the activity. The majority of educational content is on learning, practicing, and/or participating in the activity skill.

**Audited (not graded) Academic Course Work:** taken at a college or university and no academic credit is awarded. No grade is recorded, and tests or examinations are not required. An official transcript from the college or university must indicate "audit". Course content must be directly linked to the therapeutic recreation knowledge areas delineated in the current NCTRC Job Analysis study.

**Continuing Education Provider or Authority:** Authorized providers of continuing education may be accredited by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training. NCTRC accepts the continuing education from education providers who follow the IACET Criteria and Guidelines for continuing education, whether they are officially sanctioned by IACET or not.

**Continuing Education Unit:** One

CEU = ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience, under responsible, qualified direction and instruction. The International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) is the caretaker of the CEU.

Guest Lecture at a College or University: Presenting a lecture to an undergraduate or graduate class on a topic related to the NCTRC National Job Analysis Knowledge Areas. The lecture must be a minimum of 60 minutes and must be verified by the College or University.

IACET (International Association for Continuing Education and Training): the internationally recognized organization for standards and certification for continuing education and training. The IACET Criteria and Guidelines for Quality Continuing Education and Training Programs are available for free at [www.iacet.org](http://www.iacet.org). NCTRC uses these criteria and guidelines as an indicator of quality continuing education.

Intervention Skills Session/Courses: may incorporate an activity skill, but the majority of the focus is on using the therapeutic recreation process through facilitation techniques that restore, remediate and/or rehabilitate

functioning. The education content of an intervention skills session/course must incorporate diagnostic and assessment information and involve the therapeutic recreation intervention planning and implementation process through the use of intervention modalities that adhere to professional standards of practice.

Job Analysis Skill Areas: define the skills used by a professional Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist on the job. The skills represent minimum competent practice. NCTRC uses these Job Skill Areas as criteria for determining therapeutic recreation professional experience regardless of whether it is paid or volunteer. Professional experience used for recertification purposes must relate to the Job Analysis Skill Areas.

Job Analysis Knowledge Areas: define the knowledge required to perform the Job Analysis Skills used by a professional Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist on the job. The knowledge areas are the basis for educational and testing requirements at NCTRC. NCTRC uses these Knowledge Areas as criteria for determining whether continuing education is related to therapeutic recreation.

Length of Continuing Education: Each continuing education session must be 60 minutes or

longer. Sessions of less than 60 minutes will not be accepted by NCTRC regardless of the content.

Professional Experience: Each CTRS is a professional in the field of therapeutic recreation. Professional experience in therapeutic recreation is assumed to be at a level suitable to an individual holding a baccalaureate degree or higher.

Professional Experience Documentation: There are several ways to document professional experience in therapeutic recreation. For those who are employed full or part time in a traditional therapeutic recreation job title, verification would be confirmed by the personnel or human resource department of the agency. If there is a question of job duties, a copy of the official agency job description should be submitted. For individuals who volunteer in a therapeutic recreation program, an official volunteer log should be kept of the exact dates and times of volunteer hours in therapeutic recreation. At the time of recertification, submit the log signed by the CTRS supervisor or staff member at the agency. For those who volunteer professional service in therapeutic recreation, a log should be kept of committee work or other activities and, at the time of re-

## **Are You Supervising a Student Intern?**

If you are currently supervising a student intern, be sure to have them visit [www.NCTRC.org](http://www.NCTRC.org). There is a new section on our web page for "STUDENTS". Just click on "STUDENTS" and that will take you to our "PATH TO CERTIFICATION". If the student intern follows the graphics around the path, they will be able to access all the information they need to learn about and apply for professional eligibility with NCTRC.

The "PATH" includes a tour of the NCTRC Website, a link to the [NCTRC Certification Standards](#), all professional eligibility application forms, and certification exam information. Of course, once your students visit this section of the web, they are welcome to explore the entire Website.

## Mastery Testing and the Certification Exam

In November 2001, NCTRC instituted the first linear computer based exam. That means that the 200-item certification exam was administered on a computer. With the advent of computer based testing came a significant expansion in the testing window and the places where the exam was offered.

NCTRC's paper and pencil exam had previously been offered twice a year on the second Saturday of May and the second Saturday of November. The exam was offered in only 10 cities across the U.S. in May and 15 cities in November. With computer-based testing, the exam is now offered over a 5 day (Monday through Friday) testing period in February, May, August and November. The exam is available at over 300 locations in the U.S. and Canada making access extremely convenient.

Candidates do not need extensive computer experience to use computer-based testing. At the testing center, each candidate receives a brief on-line computerized tutorial to guide them on the use of the computer for the NCTRC Certification Exam.

During the exam, each candidate is able to use the computer mouse to select answers to the exam questions and to move through the exam. Some unique features of the computer exam include the candidates ability to mark questions as a reminder to review them later; skip questions to answer later, and to continuously track remaining testing time from the display on the computer.

Beginning with the May 2002 exam, NCTRC moved to computer mastery testing for the national certification exam. This added an-

other layer of convenience to the testing experience for certification and recertification.

How does "mastery testing" differ from "linear testing"? In a linear test, everyone receives the same test questions. In mastery tests, some candidates receive more questions than others. Mastery testing starts out with a base test that all test candidates take. At the end of the base test, each candidate's score is tabulated and one of three decisions is made: (a) a high enough number of questions are answered correctly and the candidate passes; (b) not enough questions are answered correctly and the candidate does not pass; or (c) the candidate does not answer enough questions to pass but does not have a low enough score to fail. This last group has what is considered "intermediate performance". It is not possible to determine a pass or a fail, and the candidate is given another testlet (15 test questions) to see if a pass or fail can be determined.

The NCTRC CTRS Mastery Exam is, therefore, a variable length exam. The base test is completed by all candidates and consists of 90 questions for which each candidate has 86 minutes. Upon completion of the base test of 90 questions, a candidate will receive (a) a passing score ending the exam; (b) a failing score ending the exam; or (c) a score that falls in the range that is neither failing nor passing and will allow the candidate to move on to another section.

The additional sections of the mastery exam are called "testlets", each containing 15 questions and lasting for 14 minutes. At the end

of each testlet, the same scoring as at the end of the base test will occur and the exam will either end or continue. If a candidate received the base test and all testlets, that individual would complete the base test plus 6 additional testlets of 15 items each.

At the conclusion of the exam, each candidate receives a written preliminary score report from the test center supervisor. And this same supervisor can provide technical assistance throughout the exam experience.

It is very interesting to examine the results of mastery testing. The majority of individuals who take the NCTRC Certification Mastery Exam receive final results and end the test after the 90-item base test. Below is information on the number of candidates tested and testing results from the May and August 2002 exams:

- 369 individuals tested in May exam and 232 candidates tested in August 2002
- In the May , 72% passed the exam and 28% did not pass
- In the August, 76% passed and 24% did not pass
- The overall pass rate for both master exam administrations in May and August 2002 is 73%

Considering that the mastery exam is a variable length exam, it is also interesting to look at the rates of pass/fail at each stage of the exam. When the results of testing from both May and August are combined, 65% of the individuals taking the mastery exam received a final score after the base test with

## New “Employer Corner” on Web at [www.NCTRC.org](http://www.NCTRC.org)

NCTRC provides an extremely valuable service to employers by verifying active certification for employees and job applicants. In the past year, the NCTRC Online Verification Services has made the process even more accessible and timely.

The “Employers Corner” was conceived as creating a place where employers could go for information specific to their needs. NCTRC hopes to provide information most useful to employers who hire CTRSs in healthcare and human services. This new section of [www.NCTRC.org](http://www.NCTRC.org) includes the following information:

- The full article on “Job Titles vs. Certification Trademarks”
- NCTRC’s current Verification System. This list of

active CTRSs is updated every 24 hours. If you do not find someone on the list, please call NCTRC for even more current information.

- NCTRC’s Employer Guide. This useful document helps the employer determine valid credentials and information on certification.
- A Link to NCCA. Ever wonder what standards NCTRC meets? NCTRC has had its certification program accredited as meeting the highest national standards. NCCA (The National Commission for Certifying Agencies) sets accreditation standards for national certifying bodies. Going to NCCA provides more information on the stringent national standards the

## Review and Test Statistics

### November 2001 and February 2002 Exam Results

493 candidates took the computer linear certification exam in November 2001 and 292 candidates took the February 2002 linear certification exam. 80% passed the exam and were awarded the CTRS credential while 20% did not pass.

### New Applications for Professional Eligibility

Between August 1, 2001 and February 1, 2002, a total of 919 new applications for professional eligibility were received at NCTRC. Of the 919 new applications, a total of 742 or 81% of the applications met NCTRC Professional Eligibility requirements.

### Recertification Applications

NCTRC received and reviewed 2,281 applications for recertification from CTRSs between April 2001 to April 2002. Of those applications,

## Seventh Published Notice: **Certification Standards Changes and Effective Dates**

The following changes to the NCTRC Certification Standards have been approved for entry level professional eligibility applications in therapeutic recreation.

### Content Course Change – Elimination of Swing Courses:

Effective December 31, 2002, the current standard allowing for the use of a swing course toward the requirements in therapeutic recreation content coursework will be

changed allowing only therapeutic recreation content coursework as defined by the NCTRC standards to be used toward the TR content course requirement.

### Internship Change – Increase in the Number of Internship Weeks and Hours:

Effective December 31, 2002, the field placement standard requiring a “minimum 360-hour, ten (10) consecutive week field place-

ment experience” will be revised to require a minimum 480 hour, twelve (12) consecutive week field placement.

### Support Course Change – Change in Human Growth and Development Requirement:

Effective August 1, 2003, the NCTRC standard for a support course in Human Growth and Development content will require such a course to cover human

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*NOTE: All terms of office, in parenthesis after each name, begin and end in April of each year. All correspondence to any member of the NCTRC Board, Committees or Staff should be mailed to the NCTRC National Office at 7 Elmwood Drive, New City, NY 10956*