

Recreation Therapist

Use games, sport, art and outings as treatment for people recovering from illness, injury or living with disability. A diploma or degree, mostly in hospitals and care homes.

TYPICAL PAY

\$62,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$45k to \$85k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Long-term care homes, hospitals, rehab centres, community progra...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
 Grade 12 English, plus anything active or creative: physical education, art, music, drama. Volunteer at a care home or with an adaptive sports program.
- 2 Diploma or degree** 2 to 4 years
 A 2-year therapeutic recreation diploma at colleges such as Mohawk, Georgian, Douglas or Red River, or a 4-year degree in therapeutic recreation or recreation and leisure studies at a university such as Waterloo, Brock, Dalhousie or Alberta.
- 3 Placements** Built into the program
 Unpaid placements in care homes, hospitals or community programs. Degree students do a long final internship.
- 4 Professional membership** After graduation
 Join your provincial body, such as Therapeutic Recreation Ontario, and apply for its designation. Most Alberta employers require membership in the Alberta association.
- 5 Optional certification** After a degree
 The CTRS (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist) credential from NCTRC (National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification), a US body, needs a degree, set coursework, a 560-hour internship and an exam.

Pros and cons

- + You spend your day doing activities people enjoy
- + Two-year diploma gets you working
- + Mostly daytime hours
- Pay is modest for a health job
- Often the first program cut when budgets shrink
- Many part-time and contract positions in long-term care

Good to know

Ontario has 1,800 of them

Therapeutic Recreation Ontario, the provincial association, counts more than 1,800 members: practitioners, educators and students. It has been the only body speaking for the profession in Ontario since 1...

Alberta pays best

Alberta's wage survey puts recreation therapists at an average of about \$37 an hour, with employers usually requiring a 4-year degree and membership in the provincial association. That is well above wha...

Optional boosts

CTRS (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist). Degree completion. Dementia and mental health specialties. Management.

Where these numbers come from

Alberta ALIS: Recreation therapist occupation profile (wages)
 Job Bank: Rehabilitation assistant, wages (same pooled occupation group, updated Nov 2025)
 Therapeutic Recreation Ontario
 Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association: membership

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/recreation-therapist>



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