

Music Therapist

Use music as clinical treatment in hospitals, schools and hospices. A real degree, a real internship and a national board exam.

TYPICAL PAY

\$77,930

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$47k to \$153k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Hospitals, schools, hospices,
mental health centers, nursing ho...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Play an instrument well, sing, and take biology and psychology. Guitar, piano and voice are the three working tools of the job.
- 2 Approved degree program** 4 years
 A bachelor's degree in music therapy from a program approved by the American Music Therapy Association. You audition on your instrument to get in.
- 3 Clinical internship** About 6 months
 Supervised clinical training in a hospital, school or care setting. It is required, it is full time, and it is frequently unpaid.
- 4 Board exam** One exam
 Pass the exam from the CBMT (Certification Board for Music Therapists) to earn the MT-BC (Music Therapist, Board Certified) credential.
- 5 Work, and keep the credential alive** Ongoing
 Board certification lasts 5 years and renews on 100 continuing education credits.

Pros and cons

- + Music and clinical work in the same job, which is rare
- + Strong projected demand and a clear national credential
- + You see real change in patients that other treatments do not reach
- An unpaid clinical internship right when your loans come due
- Published pay figures come from a mixed group and flatter the field
- Emotionally heavy work, especially in hospice and pediatrics

Optional boosts

Neurologic music therapy. Hospice and palliative care. Autism and special education. A master's degree.

Good to know

It started with war veterans

Musicians played in United States veterans hospitals after both world wars, and doctors noticed the patients responded. Hospitals started hiring the musicians, universities built degree programs to train them,...

Singing survives when speech does not

People with some kinds of aphasia, who have lost the ability to speak after a stroke, can still sing lyrics they knew before. Therapies built on that observation are a standard part of stroke rehabilitation now.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Music Therapists (29-1129.02)
 Certification Board for Music Therapists
 American Music Therapy Association
 Berklee College of Music

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/music-therapist>



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