



How to Proceed When You Believe Someone is Misrepresenting Him/Herself as an Art Therapist

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Overview

From time to time, you may encounter a person who represents herself/himself (or is represented in media) as an art therapist and/or is using one or more professional designations, yet does not appear to possess an art therapy degree, certificate, credentials or license. State licensure laws and regulations prohibit a person from performing certain activities circumscribed by a particular profession's scope of practice, unless they hold a state license or are legally exempt from that requirement. Some states have art therapy licenses that delineate the legally permissible scope of practice for art therapists. Other states' licensing boards include art therapy as a form of psychotherapy. In either case, states can enforce their prohibition against the unlicensed practice of art therapy.

Determining Practitioner's Scope of Practice

If you have questions about someone's representation of herself or himself as an art therapist, providing art therapy services, or having an art therapy degree, certificate, credentials or license, you may be able to ascertain whether or not the person actually has the credentials claimed.

In general, art therapists in private practice should have their degrees and/or certification certificates clearly displayed in their workspaces. Facilities who employ art therapists should have copies of their registration and/or board certification certificates and/or their respective licenses. One can also do an online search to see if the person is licensed, or registered and board certified.

You can refer to the attached flow chart and take the following steps in order to determine the practitioner's scope of practice to refer to their services as art therapy:

- **Art Therapy Degree:** Did the practitioner obtain a master's degree in art therapy from an AATA approved program?
 - Some schools may have databases of their graduates, so it may be possible to look the person up there, but not all schools have these and not all graduates opt in to be included on these lists.
 - In some states, once an individual finishes graduate school with a master's degree in art therapy, s/he can be called an "art therapist in supervision," an "art therapy intern" or, simply, an "art therapist." In other states, you may not be able to call

yourself an art therapist, or use the word “therapist” in any way, until you have a license to practice psychotherapy.

- Graduates with bachelor’s degrees in art therapy and other practitioners may offer therapeutic or community arts programs, but are not allowed to call themselves “art therapists.”
- Post-masters Art Therapy Certificates are issued through colleges and universities to those with a masters degree in a related field. Depending on the nature of the program, the person may be eligible to become ATR and ATR-BC. The same query method applies as for degrees.
- **Art Therapy Credential:** Is the practitioner registered and/or certified by the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB)
 - Determine whether a person’s name is in the database of the Art Therapy Credentials Board http://www.atcb.org/find_a_credentialed_art_therapist/
 - Note:** There can be many reasons why someone may actually be ATCB-credentialed or in process to become credentialed, yet does not come up in the ATCB database, so regard this as non-definitive.
 - If you believe the person is an art therapist but is not yet credentialed by the Art Therapy Credentials Board, you might share your experience as to the benefits of being credentialed and provide the website link: <http://www.atcb.org>
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- **Art Therapy License:** Does the practitioner hold an active state license (if necessary)?
 - Determine if the practitioner holds a license in art therapy, creative arts therapy, or a related mental health profession (such as counseling, psychology, social work, and/or marriage and family therapy).
 - You can access any state’s licensed professionals’ database to search by name and other key words. Bear in mind that there can be lag time between the person receiving a license and the input of this data into the database.
 - If you believe the person is an art therapist but is not yet licensed, you might share your experience as to the benefits of being licensed, whether you are in a state with a specific Art Therapist license or a state with other kinds of licenses for which an art therapist can qualify.

NOTE: An individual who obtains ATR or ATR-BC by way of a post-masters certificate in art therapy may be able to call their services “Art therapy.” AATA and ATCB recognize these individuals proficiency. However, in states that have an independent art therapy license, only those who have the license can refer to their services as art therapy. An art therapy license requires a masters degree in art therapy.

Reaching Out

Depending upon the situation, you may choose to reach out to that person. By calling and/or sending a polite email or letter, you can express your appreciation for the person's interest in art therapy and your desire to share some information that may prove useful. Some options you may consider include:

- express appreciation for their interest in using art with their clients;
- extend an invitation to an art therapy event, meeting, workshop, etc.;
- offer to help mentor or supervise the person in becoming credentialed and/or licensed; and
- become a source of career information and support.

These approaches reflect positively upon the profession and yourself, as an art therapist. If you believe the person is an art therapist but is not yet an AATA member (which you can check in the membership database), you might share your experience as to the benefits of being an AATA member and invite the person to a chapter event, workshop, etc., and include links to the American Art Therapy Association and the local chapter website.

www.americanarttherapyassociation.org

Avenues of Redress

If you believe, after reasonable inquiry into the facts, that this person is deliberately misrepresenting herself or himself, there are official avenues of redress. These might include a letter from your Art Therapy State Chapter or from the American Art Therapy Association.

If you believe that the person is practicing outside of their scope of practice, anyone can lodge an ethics complaint to the appropriate entity that has jurisdiction over the subject and the nature of the complaint. The ATCB can only investigate individuals who hold an art therapy credential, but a state licensing board may be able to conduct a wider investigation. If your state regulates the practice of art therapy through a licensure board because it has a specific art therapy or creative arts therapy license you may report licensure violations to your state licensure board. For further information, please contact the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB) <http://www.atcb.org/> or your state licensing board to determine your options for courses of action, if you believe that ATCB or licensure violations have occurred.

NOTE: The American Art Therapy Association Ethics Committee only provides education to help individuals how to act ethically when facing a dilemma. The Ethics Committee is not authorized to provide advice or conduct investigations.

Media

If you observe that any mass media (newspaper, magazine, television, etc.) is not using suffixes for credentials or licenses properly when referring to an art therapist who holds them, you can email or write the reporter, journalist, author, etc. Provide a list of proper references that you urge them to use with an art therapist's name, where appropriate. Point out that this will help educate the public with regard to the profession's standards. If someone in the media represents a person as an art therapist whom you know does not have the requisite education,

credentials or license to perform art therapy, explain in writing about art therapy education, clinical training, credentials and licensure.

Provide the media contact with the American Art Therapy Association website link so they can find out about the educational standards for art therapists, art therapy master degree programs, certificates, and universities that provide these, along with other art therapy information. You may wish to encourage them to directly contact you and/or the local Association Chapter to answer further questions.

Be proactive with media contacts —you can offer additional ideas for local or national stories about degreed, certified, credentialed and/or licensed art therapists or about programs utilizing art therapists in your area. (*See Sample Letter to Media Contact*)

Additional Information

- Familiarize yourself with your state's licensure options and legal requirements that affect art therapists. Consult the "members-only" side of the American Art Therapy Association website to review the **Licensure Titles: Options for Art Therapists** matrix and the **State Licensing Board Directory and Information 2015** in the *Public Policy* section.
- Add a section to your Chapter's website or your professional website that outlines the requirements for a credentialed professional art therapist in your state with a link to the state licensure board.

Sample Letter to Media Contact

(After you check pertinent databases or other sources to support any assertions you make)

[CHAPTER LOGO]

[ADDRESS]

[DATE]

Dear (Editor, reporter, author or other responsible person's name):

Those of us at [YOUR CHAPTER NAME], a Chapter of the American Art Therapy Association, are pleased to see your recent article on [Example: the use of art in helping individuals]: [Describe the article with headline, publication & date]. However, the person identified as an "art therapist" does not appear to [have an art therapy master degree; hold ATCB credentials, be licensed in the state, etc.]

In order to become a bona fide art therapist, a master degree in the field of art therapy or a post-professional certification in art therapy for those in related fields, is required. Post-graduate credentials, ATR and ATR-BC, are conferred by the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB) <http://www.atcb.org/> after a thorough review to ascertain that the applicant's educational and training background meet the stringent criteria for credentialing. ATCB-credentialed art therapists must obtain continuing education in the field, also. All these ATCB requirements serve to protect the public and ensure that only those who are fully qualified to practice the specialized profession of art therapy are recognized and recognizable by use of the title, "art therapist," and the ATR or ATR-BC suffix.

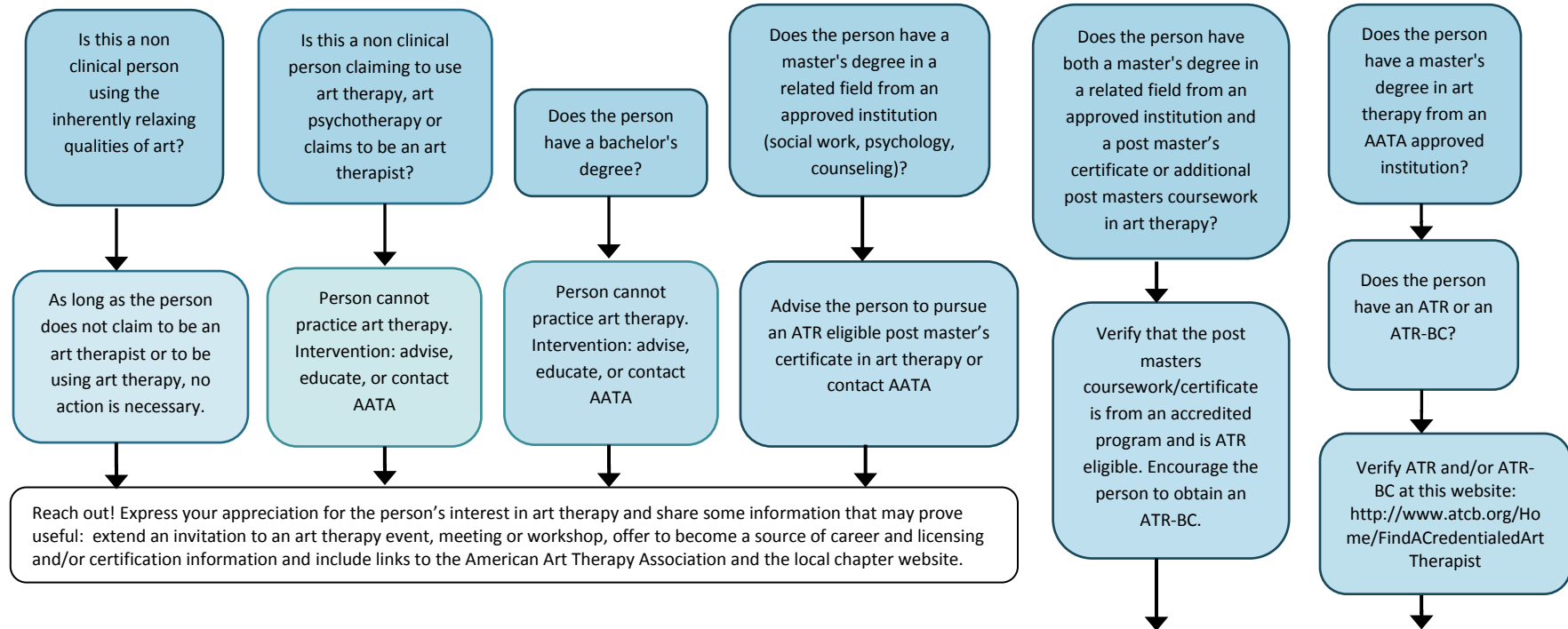
The [YOUR CHAPTER NAME], a Chapter of the American Art Therapy Association, provides comprehensive information about the educational requirements for art therapy. In addition, we would welcome the opportunity to talk with you further about the groundbreaking art therapy programs underway in clinics, classrooms, and community agencies throughout this area. Please contact me for further information and to discuss upcoming events that would be of interest to your audience.

Sincerely,

(Name of the Chapter spokesperson)

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE CLAIMS TO BE AN ART THERAPIST OR PRACTICE ART THERAPY

STEP ONE: Determine level of education and scope of practice



STEP TWO: Determine compliance with state guidelines to practice art therapy

