

The Honorable Maureen Madden  
Chairwoman, House Aging & Older Adult Services  
PA House of Representatives  
Room 140 Main Capitol, Harrisburg Pennsylvania

May 30th, 2024

Dear Aging and Older Adult Services Committee Members, Dr. Oscar Lopez, Dr. James Weeden, and Kristina Fransel,

As co-chairs of the [Pennsylvania Music Therapy State Task Force](#) (PASTF), we represent music therapists in Pennsylvania as part of our work towards the Joint State Operational Plan between the [American Music Therapy Association](#) (AMTA) and the [Certification Board for Music Therapists](#) (CBMT). We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Music Therapy and Alzheimer's Disease and Other Related Dementias as part of today's Informational Meeting. Music therapy provides practical solutions to many of the issues faced by the state in coordinating a long-term plan of action for caring for our elderly. By offering unique strategies to achieve cross-disciplinary goals, music therapy interventions can provide results in a cost effective manner. As clinicians we applaud the direction and dedication of the Committee in discussing Alzheimer's and how it impacts Pennsylvanians. Thank you for making it a top priority.

Music Therapy is an established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals of all ages. Music therapists use both instrumental and vocal music strategies to facilitate changes that are non-musical in nature. After assessment of the strengths and needs of each client, qualified music therapists provide indicated treatment and participate as members of the interdisciplinary team to support a vast continuum of outcomes.

A music therapist could also work with older adults to use music to meet specific goals such as reinforcing social cues or create a song to help with remembering daily tasks. Also it should be noted that while music may elicit joy for people with memory impairment, it could also produce harm. Music stirs up many emotions and possibly painful or unpleasant memories. Music therapists are trained to recognize and treat harm. For example, if a client begins to cry after hearing a song, this is often misinterpreted as the client being "moved" or "touched" by a song. Clients with memory impairment can not always communicate what they are feeling. A crying client may be in psychological pain that was triggered by hearing the song. Music therapists monitor clients throughout sessions. Should a client become upset, music therapists modify how they are conducting a session in progress and work to mitigate further distress and aim to avoid drawing significant attention to the client. As a person's cognitive abilities continue to decline, they may speak less often. The inability to verbalize and communicate may lead to agitation in clients which in turn creates stress for the individual and their caregivers. Music therapists can provide musical interventions for non-verbal clients to communicate/express frustrations through dynamics and to continue to participate in social activities. Individuals who no longer speak can often still sing or vocalize.

A 2021 study published in *Frontiers in Neurology*, titled “Agitation and Dementia: Prevention and Treatment Strategies in Acute and Chronic Conditions” indicated that “music intervention, especially when employed in groups, can significantly reduce agitation in cognitively impaired clients. Furthermore, passive listening to music has been associated with behavioral improvement and reduction of aggressiveness and agitation. This effect is considered to be driven by a positive exploration of repressed feelings. This article further states: “In recent days, the global pandemic has increased agitation incidence among dementia clients and generated higher distress levels in clients and caregivers. Hence, given the increasing presence of this condition and its related burden on society and the health system...” (Carrarini, 2021).

Music therapy can also be used as a substitute for pharmaceuticals with dementia patients. The sooner dementia patients are diagnosed and begin treatment, the greater the chance the treatment will be effective. Treating Alzheimer’s disease and dementia is one of the most costly healthcare conditions to manage, however, delaying the symptoms of dementia can lead to significant financial savings. Medicare does not require that music therapy be offered in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, or hospices. One of the ways a 2019 study found that the use of medication, length of nursing visits, and number and length of home health-aide visits can all be measured in total cost savings. (Trainor, 2019). By implementing music therapy for a patient some of these areas may be reduced, meaning families and caregivers can focus more on their time with their loved ones then on financing the steep medical bills they may acquire.

To support the use of music therapy as a viable, cost effective, and necessary service for the Alzheimer’s and Dementia populations, we offer the following:

- Decreased risk of falls in patients attending music sessions (Chabot, et al. 2019).
- Music therapists enhance independence and self-sufficiency by successfully addressing fear, depression, self-esteem, isolation, grief, and loss.
- To assist older adults in their use of music to maintain traditions, music therapy interventions utilize client directed/selected music and in turn provide an opportunity to recognize and support the culture of individuals.
- Music therapy services are offered directly in the home of qualified seniors through the PDA Waiver plan.
- Music therapists are contracted by nursing homes, senior centers, LIFE programs, adult daycare centers, assisted living facilities, hospice institutions, hospitals, behavioral health institutions and rehabilitation facilities to provide services that restore, improve and maintain our client’s quality of life.
- Engagement in structured, goal-directed therapeutic musical interventions is effective in decreasing anxiety and physical discomfort, resulting in a positive alteration of mood, increased relaxation, and reinforcement of safe behaviors (Forbes, 1998; Foster, N.A. & Valentine, E.R., 2001).
- Music is a complex medium that allows room for growth and development and demands some intellectual activity in order to maintain an acquired competency level (Clair, 1999).
- Music therapy addresses behaviors which disrupt activities of daily living, including resistance to everyday care and wandering (Forbes, 1998; Cohen Mansfield, J. & Werner, P., 1997).

- Inclusion of family members and/or friends in therapy sessions allows opportunities for expression of feelings and successful communication with individuals whose cognition and expressive and receptive abilities have been compromised. (Aldridge, 1994)
- Music therapy provides opportunities to develop successful relationships and reinforce appropriate social behaviors between individuals and staff.
- Music stimulates interest, motivates participation, and provides opportunities for generations within communities to interact (Clair, 1999).
- Music therapy stimulates socialization and quality of life (Anderson, M. A., Culliton, K. R., & Brill, C., 1995).
- Music positively influences food intake; behaviors oppositional to successful meal consumption are alleviated (Ragneskog, H., Brane, G., Karlsson, I., & Kihlgren, M., 1996).

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, music therapists provide services that help restore, improve and maintain a quality of life for people with Alzheimer's Disease and other related Dementias. Music therapists deliver these services directly to seniors in their homes, in senior centers and adult daycare centers, in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, in hospitals and outpatient clinics, behavioral health and mental health centers, community centers and schools. For example, music therapy is currently provided to seniors across PA in facilities including but not limited to:

- Arbor Terrace Willistown (Chester County)
- Arden Courts Allentown by ProMedica (Allentown)
- Arden Courts Easton (Easton)
- Artman Lutheran Home (Ambler)
- Asana Hospice (Ridley Park)
- Atria at Cranberry Woods (Cranberry Twp)
- Barclay Friends (West Chester)
- Bethlehem South Skilled Nursing Facility (Bethlehem)
- Brandywine Living at Longwood (Kennett Square)
- Bridges of Ben Creek (Mechanicsburg)
- Broomall Rehabilitation and Nursing Center (Broomall)
- Camilla Hall (Immaculata)
- Celebration Villas (Chippewa)
- Centre Care (Bellefonte)
- Clarks Summit Senior Living (Clarks Summit)
- Community LIFE (various locations)
- Concordia Lutheran Ministries at Cabot- Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation (Cabot)
- Complete Care (Greater Philadelphia Area)
- Cornwall Manor (Central PA)
- Country Meadows Retirement Communities
- Eagleview Landing (Exton)
- Fellowship Community (Lehigh County)
- Freedom Village (Coatesville)
- Geisinger Neurology (Danville)
- Harrison House (Chester)
- Heartland Home Care & Hospice (Wyomissing)
- Holiday Niagara Village (Erie)
- Homeland Center (Harrisburg)
- Horsham Center for Jewish Life (North Wales)
- Jenners Pond (West Grove)
- Jewish Association on Aging (Pittsburgh)
- Kendal-Crosslands Communities (Longwood, Kennett Square)

- LECOM at Elmwood Gardens (Erie)
- Lehigh Commons (Macungie)
- Lehigh Valley Hospice (Allentown, East Stroudsburg)
- Living Branches (Lansdale)
- Maris Grove of Glen Mills
- Masonic Villages (Elizabethtown & Sewickley)
- Messiah Lifeways (Mechanicsburg)
- Morningside House (Exton)
- Newport Meadows Nursing & Rehabilitation Center (formerly Harrison House) (Christina)
- Paul's Run Retirement Community (Northeast Philadelphia)
- Penn Hospice (Ebensburg)
- ProMedica (Wyomissing)
- RiverWoods Senior Living Community (Lewisburg)
- Seasons Hospice (King of Prussia)
- Serenity Hospice (various)
- Shanti Gardens Adult Day Care (Levittown)
- Simpson Meadows (Chester County)
- St Martha Villa of Downingtown
- St. Mary's Villa (Elmhurst)
- St. John Neumann Center (Northeast Philadelphia)
- St Paul's Senior Living Community (Greenville)
- Tel Hai (Honey Brook)
- The Gardens at Easton (Easton)
- The Hearth At Drexel (Philadelphia)
- The Hickman (West Chester)
- The Residence at Presque Isle Bay (Erie)
- Touch Stone Solutions Adult Day Program (Meadville)
- Traditional Hospice (Dunmore)
- Traditional Summit (Philadelphia)
- Twin Pines Nursing (West Grove)
- Vitas Healthcare (various)
- Ware Presbyterian Village (Oxford)
- Watermark at Bellingham (West Chester)
- Waverly Heights Life Plan Community (Gladwyne)
- Willow Tree Hospice (Kennett Square)
- Whitehall Manor (Bethlehem)

Thank you for welcoming our comments on the power of music therapy with the Alzheimer's and Dementia populations. We appreciate your time and thank you for your work.

Sincerely,  
 Madison Frank, MMT, MT-BC  
 Co-Chair, PA MT Task Force

Nicole Hahna, PhD, MT-BC  
 Co-Chair, PA MT Task Force

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## Music Therapy and Dementia Care: Older Adults Living with Memory Disorders

### DEMENTIA - A TYPE OF MEMORY DISORDER

Memory Disorders typically affecting older adults are diseases that cause progressive damage to the brain resulting in dementia. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 5 million adults in the United States are living with dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. Of the 5 million adults living with dementia, 80% of those live alone or with others in their communities, while 20% reside in care facilities. Residents in living communities are often placed due to limitations of living at home or with loved ones, as individual needs outweigh the abilities of the caregivers. Behaviors and symptoms that impact daily living can include agitation, wandering, repetitive questioning, depression and sleep problems.

### FACTS ABOUT MUSIC THERAPY AND MEMORY DISORDERS

Clinical music therapy is the use of music within a therapeutic relationship between a client(s) and a board-certified music therapist. According to the 2018 AMTA Member Survey and Workforce Analysis, the work settings with the highest number of music therapists are in geriatric facilities, which include adult day care, assisted living, nursing home, geriatric non-nursing, and geriatric psychiatric units (AMTA, 2018, p. 15). Memory disorders with which board-certified music therapists (MT-BCs) work include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Alzheimer's disease
- ◆ Vascular dementia
- ◆ Dementia with Lewy bodies
- ◆ Frontotemporal dementia
- ◆ Dementia caused by injury
- ◆ Mild cognitive impairment

### *Music Therapy in Older Adults Living with Dementia is...*

- ◆ A holistic approach that relies on individual strengths and needs, positively impacts mood, behavior, cognition and mobility.
- ◆ A multi-modal means of expression, both verbal and non-verbal.
- ◆ Sensory stimulation, personally engaging, validating and comforting.
- ◆ A source of meaningful experiences between the caregiver and their loved one.

### PURPOSES OF MUSIC THERAPY

Provide structure and meaningful engagement

Enhance daily living in an individual or group setting

Promote communication and self-expression through singing, and active music making

Improve mood and increase energy

Encourage physical movement through active music making

Decrease stress and agitation through predictable, pleasurable experiences



## **MUSIC THERAPY CLINICAL PROCESS**

Prior to providing services, MT-BCs complete an Assessment to determine client(s) needs that can be addressed through music therapy, as well as strengths that can be activated during the process. They may use a variety of assessment tools and ask questions of the older adult and/or caregivers, when appropriate.

Music therapists may work as a member of a multidisciplinary team or on their own. Based on the information gathered from the client(s), clinical staff, family members and caregivers, music therapists engage in Treatment Planning to design a plan of care to support both long term goals and short-term objectives. Goals addressing anxiety, interaction, transitions, relaxation, physical activity and other needs would be included here.

Implementation of music therapy could include engaging in music making such as singing, songwriting and improvisation to promote self-expression, or the use of moving to music to facilitate the transition from the client room to the dining room for a meal. Clinical music therapy provides in-person support for client(s) by matching the live music to the needs of the client.

Important in the process of music therapy is continual Evaluation of the music therapy treatment and its effect on the client(s). Written documentation as well as appropriate verbal updates to staff/caregivers (per HIPAA guidelines) can provide information on the successful use of music to facilitate desired change. Board certified music therapists provide ongoing evaluation of the therapeutic process in order to best serve the client. Continuation or termination of services are based on a number of factors including client preference and funding (including third-party sources).

## **RESEARCH AREAS**

### ***How does it work?***

Most people have a positive relationship with music, and long term memories of experiences in faith-based and educational settings will still be accessible to the person with memory loss. Because musical perception is processed throughout the entire brain, music activates all areas of brain tissue during both receptive and expressive musical behavior. Musical memory, therefore, is stored throughout the brain which means that it is accessible even in the late stages of memory disorders when only some brain tissue is still capable of functioning normally. Additionally, music stimulates the use of synaptic connections between neurons in the many specialized areas of the brain, which may otherwise remain dormant and lose function due to the characteristic inactivity of dementia and other memory disorders. Music therapy cannot reverse the loss of cognitive function, but it can maximize the existing function.

### ***Does it work?***

While pharmacological remedies for behaviors and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) cause side effects (e.g., nausea, agitation, sleep difficulties), studies have shown that nonpharmacologic treatments pose fewer side effects and music therapy has been effective in reducing BPSD (2015). Research on music therapy in the treatment of memory disorders has shown the following benefits:

- ◆ Decreased depression & improved mood
- ◆ Decreased anxiety & agitation
- ◆ Decreased medication
- ◆ Increased alertness & orientation
- ◆ Enhanced cognition & memory recall





## *Music Therapy and Dementia Care: Older Adults Living with Memory Disorders*



- ◆ Improved communication & meaningful socialization
- ◆ Improved sleep & appetite
- ◆ Reduced caregiver stress

### ***Considerations and Possible Contraindications of Music Therapy in this Setting***

Rather than contraindications, there are considerations that need to be taken into account regarding the use of music therapy in this setting. When working with individuals with memory loss, use music that is preferred and is not associated with any traumatic event; ensure clients are able to adequately communicate their needs and preferences through music therapy evaluation, provide careful monitoring of non-verbal responses to music interventions, and ensure a manageable volume, while decreasing any unnecessary noise or visual stimulation. An assessment by a board-certified music therapist can help uncover hidden strengths and needs.

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### **What is AMTA?**

The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) represents 10,000 music therapists, corporate members, and related associations worldwide. AMTA is committed to the advancement of education, training, professional standards, and research in support of the music therapy profession. AMTA establishes criteria for the education and clinical training of music therapists. Professional members of AMTA adhere to a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in the delivery of music therapy services. AMTA's mission is to advance public knowledge of music therapy benefits and increase access to quality music therapy services. Learn more at [www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org).