ARTS IN HEALTH
IMPROVING OUR NATION’S HEALTH THROUGH THE ARTS

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Support H.R. 271, the COVER Act, sponsored by Rep. Bilirakis (R-FL), to improve access to evidence-based complementary and alternative treatments for veterans, including creative arts therapies.
- Support S. 192, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015, sponsored by Sen. Alexander (R-TN), which reauthorizes funding for support services, including creative arts therapies; directs funding for behavioral health programs; and requires the Administration on Aging to focus on health and welfare needs of older individuals, which could increase access to creative arts therapies and artist-directed health promotion programs.

TALKING POINTS

“Arts in Health” includes the professional creative arts therapies disciplines of art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, and biblio/poetry therapy, all of which are nationally board certified therapies with licensure in selected states, as well as artist-directed applications of visual, literary and performing arts, and design. These creative arts therapists and community artists work together to provide quality, cost-effective services within a wide variety of healthcare and community settings.

Access to Complementary, Alternative, and Integrative Health Interventions Helps Veterans

- H.R.271, the COVER Act, sponsored by Rep. Bilirakis (R-FL), would 1) establish a commission to examine the efficacy of the evidence-based therapy model used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for treating mental illnesses of veterans, 2) identify areas to improve wellness-based outcomes, 3) examine available research on complementary alternative treatment therapies for mental health issues, and 4) identify the benefits of including such treatments for veterans.
- Creative arts therapies, including art therapy, dance/movement therapy, and music therapy, are defined as interventions under Mind-Body Medicine by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH).
- Numerous creative arts therapies interventions have been shown to be effective for symptomatic relief related to insomnia, anxiety, pain, and various somatic presentations associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Clinical program evidence demonstrates that the creative arts therapies can effectively address the focus areas of mental health and wellness promotion in the proposed legislation.
- Artist-directed programs create opportunities for service members and their families to spend quality time with one another while being celebrated and supported by local arts organizations. These programs provide meaningful opportunities for families to access affordable cultural and educational experiences.
- Creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs and services within Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals and on military bases will provide increased access to affordable, outcomes-based healthcare and successful treatment options for veterans and military personnel who do not respond to traditional interventions.

Creative Arts Therapies and Artist-Directed Programs Support Healthy Aging

- S. 192, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 sponsored by Sen. Alexander (R-TN), would provide opportunities for states and area agencies on aging to increase access to support health promotion services for older individuals.
**TALKING POINTS (CONTINUED)**

- Accessibility to, and active participation in, the arts provides lifelong learning opportunities and increases the quality of life across the lifespan.

- Community-based cultural programs for older adults reveal positive impacts on maintaining independence and reducing dependency, which appear to reduce risk factors that drive the need for long-term care.

- Current research demonstrates that creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs can contribute to the following positive outcomes when services are integrated into medical treatment and community prevention and wellness programs:
  - Reduced lengths of hospital stays
  - Decreased need for multiple medical visits
  - Reduced reports of pain and anxiety related to illness and invasive treatment
  - Improvements in quality of life
  - Reduced levels of depression and stress
  - Decreased need for use of sedatives during medical procedures
  - Decreased use of medical interventions covered by Medicare among the aging

*Research citations available in the Arts in Health Field-at-a-Glance document online*

**BACKGROUND**

Economic analyses and cost studies show a positive trend in the use of creative arts therapies and their impact on containing healthcare costs. Research confirms that the creative arts therapies enhance coping and improve response to treatment, thereby reducing the need for hospital care and pain medication and their associated costs. In addition, access to creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs reduces patients’ level of depression and anxiety and contributes to patient satisfaction.

Creative arts therapists and community artists work in diverse settings across a wide spectrum of populations, assisting people through all life stages. Besides private for-profit and nonprofit health facilities, settings for this work include, but are not limited to, hospice programs, long-term care facilities, mental health programs, schools, rehabilitation treatment centers, special needs camps, disaster response teams, psychiatric forensic units, veterans’ facilities, prisons, community centers, wellness programs, and military bases.

Despite strong historical beginnings in veterans hospitals during World War II, and inclusion in federal programs and research grant awards over many years through agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, there remains a need to expand opportunities for creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs so that more Americans can access these cost-effective services. Creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs have the potential to positively impact the healthcare spending concerns, quality of care issues, and healthcare needs of veterans and older adults currently facing our nation. An investment in “Arts in Health” is an investment in America’s health.