

ARTS & HEALTH

Improving Health Through the Arts

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Expand coverage of creative arts therapies for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Support National Institutes of Health (NIH) research funding related to telehealth access and outcomes of creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy, and arts-based programming provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Education funding for creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy, and arts-based programming, including telehealth, designed to address mental health needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (depression, opioid crisis, social isolation), including applications for healthcare and education professionals.
- Strengthen Affordable Care Act (ACA) provisions for artists and other creative occupations to include affordable access to mental health services.

TALKING POINTS

Creative Arts Therapies and Arts-Based Programming Provide Mental Health Support and Opportunities for Social Engagement

- **Art Lab Rx** is a mobile mental health counseling agency offering wellness workshops, telehealth services, and art therapy sessions in treatment centers across **Minnesota**. The practice runs a mobile art therapy bus, breaking down accessibility barriers.
- **My-T-By Design in Fayetteville, Arkansas**, provides in-house counseling and access to arts (painting, space for poetry) plus community food/school supplies outreach. **Art Feeds and Art Bags**, also in **Fayetteville**, has designed art lesson plans (K-5) designed for children who have experienced trauma. Each lesson includes an emphasis on facilitating emotional expression.
- During the pandemic, artists, musicians, and writers in residence with **Hearts Need Art in San Antonio, Texas**, provide creative art experiences to patients and caregivers through video conference. The platform gives burned-out medical staff a creative escape and allows isolated patients to share their art experiences and efforts online with loved ones.
- **Philadelphia's Streets Department**, partnered with **Broad Street Ministry, Mural Arts Philadelphia, HAHA MAG**, and **four regular Streets Department artists** created and installed eye-catching and informative hand-washing stations to promote handwashing, social distancing, and mask wearing.
- **Sing for Hope, New York City**, pivoted in-person arts programming to a digital model, with interactive cultural events accessible by Zoom, targeting the elderly and homebound with multiple events available per day. This Healing Arts program offers direct access to artists with **live** classes and arts programming proven to have mental and physical health benefits for participants.
- **SkyART**, a community after-school arts center in **Chicago, Illinois**, has offered virtual art therapy sessions during the pandemic to children connected with partner schools, homeless shelters, and social service centers, and delivered art kits to **over 1,000 children**.
- **In St. Louis, Missouri, Metro Theatre Company's (NEA Research Grant supported) Say Something Do Something**, is an interactive and immersive drama-based violence prevention program for youth grades 4 to 6, designed to build empathy, critical thinking, decision making, and interpersonal skills in a group of students to help them learn to resolve conflicts without violence.
- **Arttherapy4life** offers consultative art therapy programming for Tennessee nursing homes, preserving dignity and fostering a sense of personal autonomy and empowerment for those living with dementia, and cognitive, mental, and developmental impairments. Workshops are supported by **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Civil Money Penalty (CMP) funds**.

RESEARCH IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPIES AND ARTS-BASED PROGRAMMING

- **NEA Report**, [“Arts Strategies for Addressing the Opioid Crisis: Examining the Evidence”](#) finds that incorporating music into treatments for opioid use disorder can contribute significant, positive effects for patients.
- Launched in 2021, the [Sound Health Network](#) is a partnership of the NEA with the **University of California, San Francisco**, in collaboration with NIH, the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**, and **Renée Fleming**. It builds on the [Sound Health Partnership](#), which brings together scientists, music therapists, artists, and the public to explore music’s impact on the brain, health, and wellness.
- According to a recent report from the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, engaging with the arts can benefit mental and physical health. As the most comprehensive review of evidence on arts and health to date, the 2019 study analyzed **evidence from over 3,700 studies from 900 global publications**. It identified a significant role for the arts in preventing ill health, promoting health and management, and treating illness across the lifespan.
- [COVID-19 and Social Distancing: Impact of Arts and Other Activities on Mental Health](#), an ongoing study by **University College London** and extended to the U.S. in partnership with the **University of Florida** and **Americans for the Arts**, is tracking 80,000 adults in the United Kingdom and United States to gauge the pandemic’s impact on mental health. Preliminary findings show that **just 30 minutes of active arts activities daily may lower anxiety and depression and increase life satisfaction**, combating the ill effects of isolation and loneliness associated with COVID-19.

AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR ARTISTS AND OTHER CREATIVE OCCUPATIONS

The national arts community requests the Affordable Care Act continues to provide:

- Access to affordable individual policies
- Protections for pre-existing conditions
- Consumer protections and essential benefits
- Requirement for coverage of preventative services
- Minimum standards of care

BACKGROUND

“Arts in Health” includes the professional creative arts therapies disciplines of art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, psychodrama, and biblio/poetry therapy, all of which are nationally board-certified therapies with licensure in selected states, as well as expressive arts therapy and artist-directed applications of visual, literary and performing arts, and design. They work together to provide quality, cost-effective services within a variety of healthcare and community settings, assisting people through all life stages. Settings include hospitals, hospice programs, long-term care facilities, mental health programs, schools, rehabilitation treatment centers, disaster response teams, psychiatric forensic units, prisons, community centers, and wellness programs.

Creative arts therapists, expressive arts therapists, and community artists have adapted the delivery of their services and diversified service options to meet needs that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. These important contributions continue to benefit consumers, family members, and healthcare providers and should be considered when identifying potential pandemic-related treatment and support services for consumers and healthcare professionals. Creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy, and arts-based programming have the potential to positively impact spending concerns, quality of care issues, and treatment needs of healthcare consumers. An investment in “Arts in Health” is an investment in America’s health.

Issue brief prepared by the Cultural Advocacy Group, a collaboration of arts and culture stakeholders working collectively to advance federal policy. Updated 2021.