Recreational therapists often work with individuals in physical medicine and rehabilitation units to improve functional independence as part of the interdisciplinary care team. Recreational Therapists, also known as Therapeutic Recreation Specialists, work with individuals through life activities.

“Recreational Therapy” means a treatment service designed to restore, remediate, and rehabilitate a person’s level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition.

Patients in physical medicine and rehabilitation settings often lack the skills needed to actively return to life activities. Recreational therapists work with those individuals who have acquired limitations as a result of stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, amputations, orthopedic or other neurological conditions, and/or medical deconditioning. The goal of recreational therapy is to reduce or eliminate these limitations to allow a return to a healthy and meaningful lifestyle.

Recreational Therapists work with the individual with an illness and/or disability to improve their physiological, psychological, and social

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independence. Recreational Therapists are trained in the understanding of psychology, abnormal psychology, human growth and development, coping strategies and mechanisms, and understanding of group structures, social interaction, activity analysis, and additional strategies to assist the individual to function as independently as possible in the most appropriate environment.

In acute healthcare settings, such as hospitals and rehabilitation centers, recreational therapists treat and rehabilitate individuals with specific health conditions, usually in conjunction or collaboration with physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, and speech pathologists.

Examples of the manner in which Recreational Therapists place this knowledge and skills into action with the individual with a disability within a physical medicine & rehabilitation setting include:

- **Improving physical, cognitive, and social functioning through activity participation and exercise**

- **Improving decision-making skills to allow for a more active and healthy lifestyle and minimize the chance for secondary medical issues**

Therapeutic Recreation Specialists have a long history of providing interventions to individuals in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and working as part of the treatment team to deliver care and rehabilitation. Through the use of recreational therapy individuals relearn functional abilities, self-care, and methods of continuing recovery after discharge from treatment facilities.

