



American Music Therapy Association

8455 Colesville Rd., Ste. 1000 • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Tel. (301) 589-3300 • Fax (301) 589-5175 • www.musictherapy.org

Administration on Aging Convened Listening Forum
Older Americans Act
February 25, 2010

My name is Judy Simpson and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Music Therapy Association. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the importance of music therapy for the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and the Administration on Aging.

Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. Music therapy treatment is efficacious and valid with both the well elderly and older persons who have functional deficits in physical, psychological, cognitive or social functioning. Research results and clinical experiences attest to the viability of music therapy even in those who are resistive to other treatment approaches. Rapidly emerging science on the neurobiological basis of the influence of music therapy procedures on brain functioning and other critical outcomes for the aging population is nothing short of remarkable.

When individualized music protocols are designed by a board certified music therapist to fit functional abilities and needs, responses may be immediate and readily apparent. Music therapy provides opportunities for:

- Memory recall and improved cognitive function
- Nonpharmacological pain management
- Anxiety and stress reduction
- Positive changes in mood
- Increased sense of control
- Improved awareness of self and environment
- Sensory Stimulation
- Improved vocal fluency
- Increased social interaction with caregivers and families
- Improved and sustained physical functioning, balance, and coordination

All of these outcomes contribute to the well-being of older individuals and promote aging in place.

Music therapy also helps families by providing structured opportunities to share common experiences, promote relaxation, and offer respite for caregivers.

Research among older adults demonstrates that music therapy can:

- Reduce depression
- Enhance social and emotional skills
- Assist in recall and language skills
- Be used to assess cognitive ability in people with Alzheimer's disease and age-related dementias.
- Decrease the frequency of agitated and aggressive behaviors for individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and age-related dementias

Music therapists offer services in skilled and intermediate care facilities, adult foster care homes, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, adult day care centers, retirement communities, residential care facilities, senior centers, hospices, psychiatric treatment centers, and other facilities. In addition, some therapists are self-employed and provide individual and group music therapy services on a contract basis.

Since 1992, music therapy has been identified within the Older Americans Act as both a supportive service and as a disease prevention and health promotion service. It is recognized as a valid treatment option in programs offered through institutions of higher education, local educational agencies and community-based organizations, including multigenerational programs. In previous reauthorizations, music therapy was specifically included in research and demonstration projects as well as education, training and information dissemination projects.

AMTA is interested in building on the success realized from these original projects within the next reauthorization, expanding access within prevention and wellness programs, and assisting with service delivery for older adults with diverse needs through home and community-based programs. Specifically, we are requesting continued recognition of the vital role the profession of music therapy plays in healthy aging. To do this, we are requesting continuation of provisions related to advancing the understanding of the efficacy and effectiveness of music therapy interventions through research, education, training and information dissemination. Professionals in music therapy, neuroscience, and gerontology are at an important juncture with respect to advances in quality care and services for the aging population. The potential to make important contributions to help older adults is large; however, the disciplines and stakeholders often work in relative independence. Therefore, we are also asking for the opportunity to convene professionals from music therapy, neuroscience research, rehabilitation and healthy aging for collaborative work to benefit basic, applied, and translational research as well as applied demonstration projects.

As AMTA celebrates 60 years of clinical history in the United States, representing over 5,000 professionally trained music therapists, we are committed to the mission of advancing public awareness of music therapy benefits and increasing access to quality music therapy services. We look forward to providing additional input through future OAA Reauthorization Input Events and thank you for consideration of our suggestions.