

North Carolina Board of Recreational Therapy Licensure, NCBRTL

Year-End Summary Report

Timeframe: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

2023 NCBRTL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Joan L. Sutton, MS, LRT, CTRS, CDP, FDRT

Email: joan@ncbrtl.org

CONSULTANT:

Becky Garrett, MS, LRT, CTRS, FDRT

Email: becky@ncbrtl.org

NCBRTL BOARD CONSISTS OF 8 MEMBERS SERVING 3-YEAR TERMS CITE: GS90C-5

Board Chair: Cari Sipe Owens, LRT, CTRS

Board Vice-Chair/Treasurer: Abena Jones-Boone, MS, LRT, CTRS

Board Secretary: Amy Albritton, LRTA

GOVERNOR APPOINTEES (4):

LRT Engaged in Training (RT Educator): Brent Hawkins, PhD, LRT, CTRS, FDRT

University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW), Wilmington, NC

Appointment Start Date: 7/1/2023

Appointment End Date: 6/30/2026

Ethics Training: 07/24/2023

Practicing LRT: Cari Sipe Owens, LRT, CTRS

Carol Woods, Weaver Dairy Road, Chapel Hill, NC

Email: trheel15@yahoo.com

Appointment Start Date: 02/25/2019

Appointment End Date: 6/30/2024

Ethics Training: 03/23/2023

Practicing LRTA: Amy Albritton, LRTA

Vidant Health P.O. Box 6028, Greenville, NC

Email: aalbritt@vidanthealth.com

Appointment Start Date: 11/29/2021

Appointment End Date: 06/30/2025

Ethics Training: 01/4/2024

Physician: Dr. Augustus Parker

Novant Health- Sports Medicine Charlotte, NC

Email: agp009@novanthealth.org

Appointment Start Date: 11/29/2021
Ethics Training: 09/25/2023

Appointment End Date: 6/30/2024

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE APPOINTEES (2):

Practicing LRT: Abena Jones-Boone, MS, LRT, CTRS
Durham VA Health Care System, Durham, NC
Email: abena@ncbrtl.org

Appointment Start Date: 03/30/2023
Ethics Training: 10/11/2023

Appointment End Date: 6/30/2026

Public Member and Consumer: Joey “Michael” Atkins
Raleigh, NC
Email: wheelchairwolf@gmail.com
Appointment Start Date: 07/1/2022
Ethics Training: 04/12/2023

Appointment End Date: 06/30/2025

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE APPOINTEES (2):

Practicing LRT: Claire Salisbury, LRT, CTRS
UNC Hospitals, Hillsborough, NC
Email: claire.salisbury@unchealth.unc.edu

Appointment Start Date: 07/01/2023
Ethics Training: 01/13/2024

Appointment End Date: 06/30/2026

Public Member: Wendy Chavez
Email: wchavez0202@outlook.com
Appointment Start Date: 07/16/2019
Ethics Training: 07/5/2022

Appointment End Date: 06/30/2025

ANNUAL REPORT

As of June 2024, the North Carolina Board of Recreational Therapy Licensure had 907 LRTs, 33 LRTAs, and 41 licensees who selected inactive status, for a total of 981 individuals. NCBRTL had a large increase in the number of out-of-state applicants (19%).

Recreation Therapy continues to be one of the few healthcare professions that allows students to become licensed and certified with only a four-year degree. During 2023-2024, the Board saw fewer licensees due to many tenured recreational therapists retiring from the field. Additionally, educators report that many RT/TR undergraduate students use the degree as a stepping stone to a master’s degree in similar fields, such as occupational therapy, social work, or doctoral programs.

It has also been reported that RT graduates are taking non-licensed behavioral health positions within the state system, where salaries are more significant than starting licensed recreational therapists.

During 2023-2024, the Board worked on updating ATRA's Standards of Practice Workshops and is preparing to offer this training in the fall of 2024. This training will help licensees better understand and comply with Chapter 90C. NCBRTL hopes the training will assist in clarifying the CMS definitions and differences between general activities and therapy. There continue to be some healthcare jobs (for example- UNC Health Hospitals) with job titles such as Activities Therapist. This causes confusion and implies to the public that the individuals in these positions are therapists when they are not licensed.

In November 2023, the Board Treasurer started assisting with collecting mail and continues to make check/cash deposits to the bank. This allows for the separation of duties and administrative assistance. The vast majority of payments are completed online through a third-party banking platform.

The appointment terms for Cari Sipe Owens and Dr. Augustus Parker expire on 6/30/2024, and recommendations have been made to the Governor's office.

2023-2024, NCBRTL issued 116 new licenses, an increase from the previous year. Sixteen active applications remain open.

This year, 19 "out-of-state" applicants were licensed, a higher number than in recent years. Whether they intend to move and practice in NC or seek a credential not available in their state is uncertain. Additionally, the number of in-state school graduates seeking licensure increased. Universities implied that internship opportunities were more accessible to students post-pandemic.

Inactive status requests remain consistent- the Board currently has 41 individuals selected to go inactive.

The Board received eight reinstatements (expired and returned within 60 days).

The Board received nine reissues (past reinstatement period).

The Board denied two applications because they did not meet the RT/TR course requirements. Sixteen active applications remain open.

The Board issued no reciprocity applicants.

No Military-Trained licensees were issued, and there is still no Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Training for recreational therapy in the military. NCBRTL does have a Rule, 21 NCAC65 .0902 Military Exemption, to accept any MOS military applicants if received—ten licensees identified as veterans of military service.

Total Licensees as of June 30, 2024

- New issue 104 LRTs- an increase of 9 from last year.
- New issue LRTAs 5- remains the same from last year.
- Inactive Status 41- increased by one from last year.
- Reinstatements 8- increased by five from last year.
- Reissues 9- increased by six from last year.

New Licensees from North Carolina Schools

- ECU 27 (decreased by two from last year).
- UNCG 18 (increased by four from last year).
- UNCW 27 (increased by eleven from last year).
- WCU 13 (increased by one from last year).
- WSSU 10 (increased by four from last year).
- Catawba 8 (increased by four from last year).
- NCCU 3 (increased by two from last year).
- Mt. Olive 1- the program is closed but decreased by one this year).

New Licensees from Out-of-State Schools

- 19 (increased by eight from last year).

Two-year NC Schools (Assistant level)

- Western Piedmont Community College- 5 (increased by one from last year).

Licenses Issued Each Month

- July 2023- 13 (increased by 4).
- Aug 2023- 8 (decreased by 5).
- Sept 2022- 14 (increased by 7).
- Oct 2023- 11 (remained the same).
- Nov 2023- 8 (increased by 3).
- Dec 2023- 5 (decreased by 4).
- Jan 2024- 12 (increased by 6).
- Feb 2024- 8 (increased by 4).
- Mar 2024- 7 (increased by 1).
- Apr 2024- 9 (increased by 5).
- May 2024- 22 (increased by 10).
- June 2024- 16 (increased by 2).

Overall Summary- on average, NCBRTL approved eleven licenses per month. The more extensive months were May, June, September, and January, which could directly result from

when spring, summer, and fall degrees are awarded. Increased numbers result from completing graduations, internships, and exam offering dates.

Update on Disciplinary Actions taken in 2022-2023:

- Follow-up from 2022-2023: UNCP continues to offer RCA 4000 Intro to TR, a course not taught by a Licensed Recreational Therapist (education is defined as a part of RT practice in Chapter 90C). UNCP states that they have noted this in the online catalog and that the course will not count toward licensure requirements. This will require students who want to become licensed to retake the intro course at another university.

Disciplinary Actions taken in 2023-2024:

- One LRT was terminated from the employment agency because the LRT did not disclose their respiratory condition upon employment. A reminder Letter to supervisors to report disciplinary actions was sent.
- A letter of education to DHHS explaining the differences between “activities,” activity directors, and recreational therapy was sent.
- One LRT was terminated from employment due to a confrontation with a patient. This LRT cursed at the patient.
- A complaint was received that the RT department at Elderhaus PACE performed the same duties as Activity Staff, except that LRTs supervise RT interns. No violation of Chapter 90C was found, but a letter of education was sent to the Elderhaus RT department.
- An LRT missed maintenance- submitted reinstatement information and fees. Is practicing as a UNC hospital RT Supervisor.
- An LRT missed renewal and submitted reinstatement fees. Not practicing only using Section F.
- An LRT missed maintenance- submitted reinstatement information and fees. The site supervisor said she was working on Monday the 17th, the same day she resubmitted the reinstatement form, and no patient harm was found.
- An LRT missed renewal, submitted reinstatement fees, and required CEUs. Per phone call and employment form- ended a job on May 19th and started the new job on June 17th. Has not practiced only in orientation training; no patient harm was found.

NCBRTL Compliance and Ethics Training (C&E Training) continues to be provided three times a year and provides LRTs/LRTAs with four credits of continuing education units (CEUs). This four-hour training assists licensees in better understanding Chapter 90C, 21 NCAC 65 Rules, and the annual requirements of the LRT/LRTA credential. NCBRTL worked on updating the Code of Ethics training to use more current examples. NCBRTL continues to require C&E training to be completed during the first year for all new licensees. Marketing materials are emailed to all LRTs/LRTAs, which recommend that existing licensees participate in this training every three years to be aware of the law and current requirements. NCBRTL’s Compliance and Ethics

Training was offered virtually via Zoom to 119 participants during 2023-2024. The feedback has been positive, so the board plans to present these trainings using Zoom for 2024-2025.

NCBRTL updated its Internship Supervisor Training and presented it to 16 licensees in June at UNC Greensboro's Recreational Therapy Lab. This in-person internship training helped educate licensees in a variety of settings on best practices for developing an internship program, internship manual, and internship learning experience. The board hopes to offer this training at least three times a year.

GOALS ACCOMPLISHED DURING 2023-2024

In 2023, a search committee consisting of two board members- one LRT, one RT consumer board member, and two past NCBRTL Chairs- completed a search for the Executive Director. The new ED took over on November 1st, 2023. The new ED meets weekly with the retired ED for guidance and mentorship for a smooth transition. Additionally, the board:

- Conducted a SWOT analysis of the NCBRTL, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and threats for the new Board and ED to manage.
- A consultant position was created, and the retired ED accepted the position. The Consultant serves as an advisee to the North Carolina Board of Recreational Therapy Licensure (NCBRTL) Board of Directors and the Executive Director utilizing institutional knowledge of the management of Chapter 90C, 21 NCAC 65 (Rules) and NCBRTL operations for NCBRTL to operate in compliance with governing regulations and promote licensure initiatives. Work performed is directed by the NCBRTL Board and supervised by the Chair of NCBRTL. Duties involve completing tasks assigned by the NCBRTL Chair, including, but not limited to, reviewing applications or conducting investigations of suspected Chapter 90 C violations should the NCBRTL Executive Director have a perceived or actual conflict of interest related to carrying out their job duties; participating in Strategic Planning activities; conducting assigned continuing education training; providing expertise on activities such as legislative and Rulemaking processes; advising the NCBRTL Executive Director on daily operational tasks; and compiling a thorough historical narrative of Chapter 90C.
- Updated and offered Internship Manual Development Training.
- Improved and updated website- including email/contact information from the retired ED to the new ED.
- Started the periodic rules review period and reviewed public comments.
- Finalized ATRA's Standards of Practice presentations—another helpful training that the board plans to start offering to licensees in the next year.

FUTURE GOALS OF NCBRTL 2024-2025

- The Board is currently interviewing and planning to make board appointment recommendations for a practicing LRT position and the Physician position to the governor's office, as these terms are completed in July of 2024.
- The Board is looking to offer Standards of Practice training during the 2024-2025 year to help licensees better understand recreational therapy and its scope of practice. This training

will also help licensees create policies and procedures to implement in their recreational therapy department.

- The board plans to review and update the NCBRTL operations manual and disciplinary action steps.
- The Board plans to update the website further, including new links for Internship Supervisor Appeal forms, updated links/information on reinstatement steps, and connections for university course options for applicants needing the 6th RT/TR course.