



2026 Pre-Conference

Friday March 6th, 2026

12:30am - 4:30pm

Outdoor Adventure Challenge Course  
1625 N. Western Rd  
Stillwater, Oklahoma

**Please dress appropriately for the weather.  
Refunds will only be issued if Outdoor Adventure  
cancels the event or if the minimum requirement  
of 10 participants is not met.**

<https://wellness.okstate.edu/outdoor-adventure/challenge-course.html>



Oklahoma Recreational Therapy Association  
Oklahoma State University



**2026 ORTA Annual Conference**

**Saturday March 7th, 2026**

**9:00am - 4:00pm**

**Willard Hall  
Oklahoma State University  
Whitehurst Ln, Stillwater, OK 74076**



Oklahoma Recreational Therapy Association  
Oklahoma State University

**ORTA Shirts:** <https://ortawebstore.itemorder.com/>

- Order by Feb 22nd 12:59PM
- Conference pick up or pay to have shipped to your residence.



**Election Process:**

The polls will be open from February 15th-28th.

**Board Positions Available:**

- President Elect (2 year team, 6 year commitment, 1 Virtual meeting monthly)
- Member at Large (3 Year Term, 1 Virtual meeting monthly)

We hope you consider joining our board and serving to make a difference for the Recreational Therapists in Oklahoma.

**Social Event:** 3/6 @ Stone Cloud Brewery. Grab some pizza at Empire Slice and come socialize at the Brewery

- Address: 917 S Husband St, Stillwater, OK 74074
- 6:30-8:30 pm
- Free Admission



**Hotel Room Blocks:** 3/6-3/8 @ Home2 Suites and Best Western

- Single Bed Rooms: \$119
- Double Bed Rooms: \$119
- HOME2 SUITES:
  - <https://group.home2suites.com/r1s7p7>
- BEST WESTERN SUITES:
  - [https://www.bestwestern.com/en\\_US/book/hotel-rooms.37120.html?groupId=9K11U2R6](https://www.bestwestern.com/en_US/book/hotel-rooms.37120.html?groupId=9K11U2R6)



**Registration:**

- Day of Registration
  - 8-9am Conference Site - Willard Hall on Oklahoma State Campus
  - Come enjoy refreshments and meet Pete's Pet Posse



**Silent Auction:** The ORTA 2026 Conference will continue the fundraising tradition with our silent auction baskets. The proceeds from these baskets are given to the OSU Recreational Therapy Student Club. The Student club utilizes these funds to help continue and grow the program, stay active on campus and help the community in Stillwater. These baskets will be found at the top of the lecture hall.



## Conference Session Breakdown

Session #1 Keynote 9:00am - 10:00am

**Location: Willard 010**

**Session Title: Enhance RT Service Delivery Through Trends Awareness, Evidence-Based Practice, and the APIED Framework**

**Presenter: Laura Kelly, CTRS**

**Session Description:** This interactive session explores how recreational therapists can enhance service delivery by integrating awareness of current industry trends, evidence-based practice, and the APIED process. Through real-world examples and reflective activities, attendees will develop actionable strategies to improve the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of service delivery in their specific professional setting.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Recognize and analyze current issues and emerging trends within the industry and assess how these factors impact operations and/or service delivery in your work setting.
2. Evaluate current practices in your work setting and identify opportunities to apply evidence-based approaches to improve patient/participant outcomes.
3. Apply practical tools to enhance each stage of the APIED process, improving the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of service delivery.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: Pro, Adm, Imp**

**10:00am - 10:15am Break**

### Breakout Sessions #2 & #3 10:15am - 11:15am

**Location: Willard 104**

**Session #2 Title: Aquatic Relief**

**Presenter: Taylor Pendleton, CTRS**

**Session Description:** This session will discuss my aquatic therapy class. A low-impact aquatic class focused on joint and arthritis relief which is ideal for gentle movement and pain management. Class includes light stretching, slow-paced water walking, and gentle range of motion exercises, all performed in shallow water to assist in reducing joint pain, improving flexibility over time. The buoyancy of the water supports the body, decreases joint strain and promotes circulation, making it suitable for individuals with arthritis and joint issues to exercise. Overall this class aims to enhance mobility, reduce stiffness, and improve overall wellbeing with minimal impact on the joints while exercising.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain how water based exercise reduces joint stress and pain, making movement safer and more comfortable for people with arthritis
2. Highlight the physical benefits of aquatic exercise, including improved mobility, strength, circulation, and flexibility.



3. Promote aquatic exercise as an enjoyable, low impact option that supports long term joint health, independence, and quality of life.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: AS, PL**

**Location: Willard 108**

**Session #3 Title: NeuroDrive: Integrating Golf-Based Interventions in Recreational Therapy**

**Presenters: Lilli Higgins, CTRS/L**

**Session Description:** This session introduces NeuroDrive, a golf-based therapeutic intervention model designed to address key behavioral, emotional, and physical symptoms across a wide range of clinical presentations and functional needs. Using structured, adaptable golf activities, participants will learn how golf-based interventions can be applied to support executive functioning, emotional regulation, motor planning, sensory integration, social engagement, and body awareness in children, adolescents, and adults with diverse diagnoses and abilities. The session emphasizes that clinicians do not need prior golf experience to implement NeuroDrive effectively. The model is built on simple, evidence-informed, and scalable activities that can be delivered using basic golf equipment and adaptive tools. Participants will receive foundational training in therapeutic application, engage in hands-on practice with golf clubs and adaptive equipment, and explore simulator-based interventions that can be integrated into recreational therapy and interdisciplinary treatment settings. In addition to clinical application, the session will examine NeuroDrive as a specialized service line within recreational therapy practice. Attendees will gain insight into positioning golf-based therapy as a research-informed niche, strategies for program implementation, and practical considerations related to service development and reimbursement. By the end of the session, participants will have a clear framework for integrating NeuroDrive into clinical practice while expanding the scope and sustainability of their services.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Analyze how targeted golf-based interventions address behavioral, emotional, and physical symptoms by identifying at least three therapeutic exercises that can be integrated into recreational therapy treatment plans across diverse client populations and functional needs.
2. Demonstrate the ability to facilitate at least two golf-based therapeutic interventions aligned with recreational therapy goals (e.g., emotional regulation, motor planning, sensory integration, or executive functioning), as evidenced through hands-on practice, participant reflection, and instructor observation.
3. Describe foundational considerations for integrating NeuroDrive as a specialized service line within recreational therapy practice by identifying at least two potential client populations and articulating two research-informed or evidence-based rationales for utilizing golf as a therapeutic modality.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PL,PRO, IMP**

**11:15am - 11:30am Break**



## Breakout Sessions #4 & #5 11:30am - 12:30pm

**Location: Willard 010**

**Session #4 Title: My Personal Journey With Mental Health**

**Presenter: John Birdsong**

**Session Description:** This session offers a candid exploration of my personal mental health journey and the meaningful role Recreational Therapy has played within it. This presentation is designed for practitioners, students, and allies who are interested in understanding mental health through both a personal and clinical lens, and in deepening their appreciation for the impact of Recreational Therapy in promoting holistic care.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. participants will learn about mental health from a first person experience.
2. Participants will identify 3 ways to decrease bias in the world of mental health.
3. Participants will identify 3 ways to address mental health signs in regard to their clients when engaged as a recreational therapist.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PRO, PL**

**Location: Willard 101 - Living Room**

**Session #5 Title: Evidence Based Poster Presentations**

**Presenter: Oklahoma State Recreational Therapy Students**

**Session Description:** This session will present 10 evidence-based poster presentations, and will include time for each therapist to discuss each poster with the individual presenter.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Participants who attend this session will be able to identify a minimum of 5 potential interventions to use with identified populations.
2. Participants attending this session will be able to identify 5 different potential assessments related to specific diagnoses.
3. Participants attending the session will be able to identify the type of social interaction patterns required by patients participating in each intervention.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: AS, PL, IMP**

**12:30pm - 1:45pm**

**ORTA Business Meeting, Awards and Lunch**

You will be given a **RED TICKET** if you have a dietary restriction. These individuals will report for their boxes first. Please fill out link by 2/28 to insure you get your choice:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdluDY8FmVcHrVHU9nZKvvap2hgSbEv-3fJrK6IVteAfbglAg/viewform?usp=dialog>





## **Breakout Sessions #6 & #7 1:45pm - 2:45pm**

### **Location: Willard 104**

#### **Session #6 Title: Assessing the perspectives of underevaluated populations: Exploring a Computer-Assisted Interview (CAI) technique in the assessment process**

**Presenter: Reed Holt, MS, CTRS/L, ATRIC; Brittany Dao, PhD CTRS/L**

**Session Description:** Computer-Assisted Interview (CAI) techniques offer a structured and efficient approach to conducting self-assessments in Recreational Therapy with underevaluated populations such as children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. This session will explore the impact that CAI can have on participant engagement, data accuracy, and efficiency during the assessment process. Attendees will learn about the benefits and challenges of integrating CAI into Recreational Therapy practice, review current research concerning effectiveness, and discuss practical implementation strategies.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Will be able to identify principles, benefits, and challenges of utilizing a CAI technique during assessment.
2. Discuss the impacts of CAI on the reliability and validity of assessment in comparison to traditional methods.
3. Explore practical strategies and develop skills for implementation of CAI into assessment practices.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PRO, PL, AS**

### **Location: Willard 105**

#### **Session #7 Title: Supporting Healing Through Play: Trauma-Informed Recreational Therapy within the Pediatric Population**

**Presenter: Lauren Bush, CTRS/L**

**Session Description:** This session will examine trauma-informed recreational therapy interventions that support both physical rehabilitation goals and psychosocial recovery for pediatric patients/clients. Participants will explore the impact of trauma on leisure participation and discuss the application of 2 TR models within the pediatric population. Emphasis will be placed on trauma-informed recreational therapy to promote post-traumatic growth, functional engagement, and increased participation in meaningful leisure during and beyond recreational therapy treatment.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Participants will be able to identify Recreational Therapist's role in navigating trauma through trauma-informed care practices
2. Participants will be able to describe how leisure participation can help patients/clients with appropriate socialization, confidence, and community building after a traumatic event
3. Participants will be able to list 3 appropriate interventions to meet patient/client goals related to post-traumatic growth at their practice

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PRO, PL, IMP**



**2:45pm - 3:00pm Break**

**Session #8 Keynote 3:00pm - 4:00pm**

**Session #8**

**Location: Willard 010**

**Session Title: Standardization of Recreational Therapy: Using Evidence-Based Practice Interventions and Protocols**

**Presenter: Tim Passmore, Professor, OSU, Ed.D., CTRS/L, FDRT & Heidi Ross, M.S., CTRS/L**

**Session Description:** Discussion of the importance associated with standard treatment protocols for clients/patients. The session will present information regarding the process, justification for standardization, and resources to support implementation within a variety of treatment settings/populations.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. The participant will identify three reasons standardization of interventions or treatment protocols is necessary.
2. The participant will be able to identify a minimum of two resources to assist with seeking standardization of treatment.
3. Participants will be able to explain why the recreational therapy profession in Oklahoma should work towards standardization of treatment.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: ADM, AS, PL, IMP**

**NCTRC Session Criteria: Professionalism = Pro, Assessment = As, Planning = PL, Implementation = Imp, Evaluation & Documentation = Eval/Doc, Administration = Adm**

**Thank you for attending our annual ORTA  
Conference!**



## Virtual Session Information

**All sessions to be viewed and confirmation form to be completed by April 12, 2026. See the link at the end of the schedule.**

**Session #1 Title: For the Love of Dogs: Supporting Communities through an Integrated Canine-Assisted Intervention**

**Presenter: Dr. Rachel M. Schmitz**

**Session Description:** This presentation describes a multi-phase research evaluation of Pete's Pet Posse (P3), Oklahoma State University's integrated campus pet therapy program featuring 100+ certified therapy dog teams serving 46,000+ people annually through 600+ events. The research findings demonstrate significant benefits across the OSU community, including stress relief and mental health improvement, enhanced sense of belonging and community building, and positive workplace impact. The program serves as an evidence-based model for addressing mental health challenges through accessible, stigma-free canine-assisted interventions that complement traditional wellness resources.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Will be able to identify 3 benefits of the evidence-based practice and of integrated canine-assisted interventions (CAI) for college student mental health, stress relief, and campus community building.
2. Identify 3 best practice components for implementing safe, ethical, and effective campus pet therapy programs that serve diverse populations while following proper training, certification, and hygiene protocols.
3. Evaluate the methodological approach of using mixed-methods case study research to assess the multifaceted impacts of campus wellness programs across different stakeholder groups.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PRO, PL, EVAL/DOC**



**Session #2 Title: Camp Firewheel: Hosting a Therapeutic Day Camp for Students**

**Presenter: Kathryn Creecy and Lori Stuart-Worth**

**Session Description:** Moore Public Schools has hosted Camp Firewheel, a summer therapeutic day camp for elementary and secondary students, for 5 years. Join us to learn how to plan, implement, and evaluate your own program to increase connection, resilience, and healthy coping for your students.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Participants will learn 3 strategies to plan and implement a therapeutic day camp.
2. Participants will learn 3 core components of a therapeutic day camp to increase connection.
3. Participants will learn 3 ways to evaluate a therapeutic day camp.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: IMP, PRO, EVAL/DOC**

**Session #3 Title: Cultural Awareness In Recreational Therapy: Identifying Mental Health Risk Across Ethnic Groups**

**Presenter: Brittany Mays, PhD., CTRS**

**Session Description:** Cultural Awareness in Recreational Therapy: Identifying Mental Health and Suicide Risk Across Ethnic Groups is a session aiming to equip recreational therapy professionals with culturally responsive skills for recognizing and addressing mental health distress and suicide risk among diverse populations. Participants will explore culturally specific expressions of psychological distress, early warning signs that may be overlooked, and barriers that influence help-seeking behaviors across ethnic groups. Through discussions, practical tools, and real-world intervention strategies, participants will learn how to implement inclusive communication techniques and design culturally sensitive intervention plans that enhance engagement, trust, and therapeutic outcomes in recreational therapy settings.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Participants will identify at least three culturally specific signs of mental health distress and suicide risk across diverse ethnic groups and apply this knowledge in case-based discussions to improve culturally responsive care
2. Participants will recognize at least three early indicators of psychological distress and suicide risk in culturally diverse clients and outline culturally responsive intervention steps using practical tools and case examples.
3. Participants will design at least two culturally sensitive intervention plans and apply two inclusive communication techniques to enhance client engagement and therapeutic outcomes.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: ADM, PRO, AS**

## **Lunch & Learn Live Virtual Session**

**These sessions will take place on March 10, 2026 and March 25, 2025 using the online link. A recorded link will be sent out for those who cannot attend and participants will have until April 12th to view and complete the CEU confirmation statement.**



**March 10th at 12:00-1:00**

**Session #4 Introduction to iRest Yoga**

<https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=m035f9aed37f00795e56164d5a631855>

**Session #4 Title: Introduction to iRest Yoga**

**Presenter: Sarah Thompson**

**Session Description:** Participants will receive a brief overview of iRest, Integrative Restorative Yoga, followed by an introductory practice session.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe the difference between yoga and iRest yoga.
2. Describe at least two health benefits of iRest yoga.
3. Participate in the somatic experience of iRest yoga.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PRO, PLA,**

**March 13th at 12:00-1:00**

**Session #5 Beyond Activities: Rediscovering Purpose and Impact in Recreational Therapy Practice**

[https://zoom.us/join/98060242366?signature=z2p7RdH1ST1bVI\\_WwCxzbnze3LqhPxm-6nu8HaURN4](https://zoom.us/join/98060242366?signature=z2p7RdH1ST1bVI_WwCxzbnze3LqhPxm-6nu8HaURN4)

**Session #5 Title: Beyond Activities: Rediscovering Purpose and Impact in Recreational Therapy Practice**

**Presenter: Lilli Higgins, CTRS/L**

**Session Description:** This session invites recreational therapists to reconnect with the purpose, impact, and professional significance of their work. In a field often misunderstood or underrepresented, clinicians may find themselves navigating burnout, role ambiguity, and the challenge of articulating the true value of recreational therapy within interdisciplinary systems and communities. Participants will explore the deeper clinical, human, and societal impact of recreational therapy beyond intervention delivery, including its role in fostering autonomy, identity, regulation, connection, and meaningful participation in daily life. The session will highlight how therapists can more effectively recognize, articulate, and showcase their impact to clients, families, colleagues, administrators, and stakeholders. Through reflective dialogue, real-world examples, and practical reframing strategies, attendees will gain renewed clarity about their professional identity and learn how to translate their work into language that communicates value, legitimacy, and outcomes. The session ultimately serves as both a professional recalibration and a call to elevate the visibility and voice of recreational therapy within modern healthcare and community systems.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Articulate at least three ways recreational therapy uniquely contributes to behavioral,



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emotional, social, and functional outcomes across client populations.

2. Examine personal and systemic factors that influence professional motivation by identifying at least two methods for sustaining purpose and engagement in recreational therapy practice.
3. Develop one actionable approach for increasing the visibility and perceived value of recreational therapy within participants' professional environments or communities.

**NCTRC Job analysis areas: PRO, PLN,**

Those conference attendees who participated in the virtual CEU session must confirm their full completion of the virtual educational session by selecting the link below and answering the question regarding the CEUs. If the question is answered falsely this action of the conference attendee will constitute a violation of the ATRA Code of Ethics and will be reported to the Oklahoma Licensing Board and the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation (NCTRC).

CEU Confirmation Statement Link:

[https://okstateches.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bJzsoKDHZQinS3I](https://okstateches.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bJzsoKDHZQinS3I)

**NCTRC Session Criteria: Professionalism = PRO, Assessment = AS, Planning = PL,  
Implementation = IMP, Evaluation & Documentation = EVAL/DOC, Administration = ADM**



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## 2026 Conference Survey Form

**Please take a moment to provide the BOD feedback on the 2026 conference. Your opinion is important to us! Thank you again for attending the 2026 conference. See you next year!**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvx0YQkdH01RW7Ri0XmyeqvXfh1JoPC2yX3vC\\_JltT\\_2cl3g/viewform?usp=header](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvx0YQkdH01RW7Ri0XmyeqvXfh1JoPC2yX3vC_JltT_2cl3g/viewform?usp=header)