



Milestone Achievement for the Profession: Federal Government Revises Occupational Code for Art Therapists

*AATA National Office
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On November 28, 2017, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Federal Register notice, "[Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\) System-Revision for 2018](#)" (82 FR 56271) announcing the federal government's revised occupational codes, including reclassification of art therapists. After delaying for almost a year, the OMB adopted nearly all of the Standard Occupational Classification Policy Committee's (SOCPC) final recommendations made in July of 2016. What does this mean for art therapists? It means that **effective January 1, 2018, art therapists will no longer be classified as recreational therapists** (under code 29-1125) and will, instead, be classified as "Therapists; All Other" (sub-code 29-1125). The AATA has worked for several years to correct this misclassification in the 2010 codes and is very proud of this achievement for the profession. The impact for the profession cannot be understated. The new SOC code will:

- Require federal and state agencies and private employers to redefine job descriptions, pay levels, and hiring guidelines.
- Require insurers to re-evaluate how art therapy services are defined and covered for individual and group insurance plans.
- May open additional approaches for state licensing and regulation.

Over the next few days, the [SOC web page](#) will be updated with the full 2018 SOC structure and definitions, principles and guidelines, and other supporting materials, including previous SOC Federal Register notices and related documents. In the coming months, O*NET, the nation's primary source of occupational information, listings and resources, and the health care provider taxonomy codes will be updated to reflect these changes.

Art therapists, particularly those employed by federal or state agencies, should note this important reclassification to their employers.

The AATA continues to work tirelessly to advance art therapy as a distinct profession in federal and state policies. The AATA wrote letters, participated in public comments, and continually followed-up with the SOCPC during this multi-year process. In 2014, the AATA petitioned the SOCPC, requesting that the occupational classification of art therapy be changed in the 2018 SOC revision. The Committee rejected AATA's request for separate classification as a mental health profession in large part due to existing policy that prevents providing a separate, defined classification for any occupation or profession for which data about the profession cannot be collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the Census Bureau on a national basis. At the time, there were only four distinct art therapy licenses, in the country. Today, that number is up

to seven, and the AATA will continue to work with our state chapters towards achieving licensure or regulation in every state.

While a separate code for art therapists is not yet possible, the Committee did agree that art therapists had previously been incorrectly classified under the occupation code for recreational therapy. The SOCPC not only recommended moving art therapists to the separate occupational sub-code “Therapists: All Other,” but also proposed to revise the description of the activities performed by recreational therapists to omit reference to use of art in order to help avoid further confusion between the two occupations.

To learn more about the process that led to this week’s announcement, see “[A Step Forward for Distinct Classification of Art Therapy through the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#),” published in 2016 in *Art Therapy Today*.



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