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Update to the Membership on Therapeutic Recreation Job Qualification Advocacy Efforts

The Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals (S.A.R.P.) is a member driven organization committed to supporting and being the voice of professional working in the field of recreation. The Association advocates on behalf of its' members to raise the awareness of the profession and the value of having a recreation professional supporting a community.

Background:

In February of 2018, the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association (CTRA) posted for Therapeutic Recreation Month that entry-level Recreation Therapists need to have a Bachelor's Degree in Therapeutic Recreation OR a Diploma in Therapeutic Recreation to practice. CTRA also presented at the CTRA Conference in 2017 that within Canada, there are many educational paths for the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) profession. Two that stand out are University programs in Therapeutic Recreation and College programs in Therapeutic Recreation. The National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) standards are ANY Degree plus 5 courses in Therapeutic Recreation.

The Issue:

In 2017, members brought concerns over inconsistent job postings to the attention of S.A.R.P. These job postings named designated Degrees only and limited qualifications for many TR professionals working in Saskatchewan who were currently meeting Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS) qualifications, and secondly, the standard for qualifications of Degrees as established by CTRA and National Certification for Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (NCTRS) for Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS).

S.A.R.P. Advocacy Efforts:

Since that time, S.A.R.P. has been advocating for consistency in TR job qualifications across the province, specifically in the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). SHA is the number one employer of TR Professionals across the province. S.A.R.P. wants to provide you with an update on what has occurred to date. A Therapeutic Recreation Task Force was formed last year (2017) in an effort to look into the changing qualifications that the former Saskatoon Health Region (SHR) was posting for Recreation Therapist positions.

After conducting research into Recreation Therapist postings throughout the province, S.A.R.P. sent out formal letters which included several meeting requests. A meeting was held with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) where S.A.R.P. was directed to meet with Senior Leadership of the new Saskatchewan Health Authority, Human Resources Department, to express concerns over the inconsistencies in the TR job postings. These concerns included the following:

- Specifying named Degrees on job postings and job descriptions. According to the Letter of Understanding that was signed by HSAS and the provider Unions in 1998 (this has not been changed), the job description of a "Recreation Therapist" requires either a recognized Degree in Recreation Studies with a specialization in Therapeutic Recreation or a recognized Diploma in Therapeutic Recreation. S.A.R.P. would like to see the named Degrees taken off the job descriptions and job postings.
- Following the Letter of Understanding as it is still laid out in the Collective Bargaining Agreement with HSAS.
- That HSAS follows the Certification standards of NCTRC and CTRA that state ANY Degree plus 5 courses in Therapeutic Recreation.

What S.A.R.P. learned from the meeting included:

- SHA is looking further into how HR posts future TR job positions. Job postings will include either a Diploma or a Degree position. It is the view of S.A.R.P. and its' members, who voted in CTRA Standards of Practice, that a Recreation Therapist is a professional with skills that are used to set goals and objectives for persons with illness or disability to find meaning through leisure (CTRA, 2006). These skills are taught and can be met with a Degree or a Diploma.

- SHA is also connecting with their staff to discuss the wording around specifically named Diplomas or Degrees.

Currently, S.A.R.P. is setting up a meeting with the Deans of the Post-Secondary Education Institutions that provide Therapeutic Recreation education and/or Kinesiology and Health Studies in Saskatchewan. This meeting is to discuss current issues and to see if we can collaborate on how to improve things in the future and set a provincial wide standard for Recreation Therapist qualifications (i.e. Degree and Diploma and/or any combination).

S.A.R.P. has raised awareness of the issues to the following stakeholders:

- The former Saskatoon Health Region (SHR);
- The current Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA);
- Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO);
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU);
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE);
- Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS);
- Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association (CTRA);
- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Advanced Education;
- Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport;
- University of Saskatchewan - College of Kinesiology;
- University of Regina - Department of Kinesiology and Health Studies;
- Saskatchewan Polytechnic Therapeutic Recreation Diploma Program.

SHA urges applicants to apply for positions even if their specific Diploma or Degree is not listed on the job posting. If employees do not get a position and believe they had adequate seniority and education, you should ask for further clarification or grieve it so SHA can research your education further.



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