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Testimony for HB 2432

For the protection of the public, it is important that the practice of clinical art therapy and related research be conducted by people trained as clinical art therapists and researchers and that the terms “art therapy” or “art therapist” also be reserved for these persons.

The training of art therapists overlaps with other clinical fields, but we have specialized artistic training in addition to that of mental health counselors and social workers. Similarly, art therapists have clinical training in addition to artistic training of art teachers or professional artists.

Art therapists have training in the therapeutic use of art materials.

- Different art materials are appropriate for different people and scenarios.
- It is often inappropriate and potentially dangerous to use more fluid or tactile materials, like watercolors or clay, with a person experiencing a crisis, severe psychosis, or anyone feeling strong emotions.
- More structured materials, like pencils or pens, can be useful when you want the artist to provide a clear and detailed representation of people, animals or things to learn information (see visual examples).

Art therapists have training in ethical considerations with regard to art products.

- Artist-clients or research participants have the right to informed consent and confidentiality. They should be a part of informed decisions if they choose to allow their work to be photographed, displayed in an exhibit or presentation, or even waive their right to confidentiality.
- There are varying risks to artist-clients’ confidentiality and psychological wellbeing when photographing or displaying artwork with clinically sensitive information and artwork without it (see visual examples).

Art therapists have training in cultural awareness when using art materials.

- It is important to consider the cultural background of artist-clients or research participants when selecting art materials, including which materials they have used before.
- Informed consent for treatment, research or artwork display may look different depending on the cultural background of the artist or even the country in which they reside.

In each of these areas—therapeutic use of art materials, ethical considerations with art products, and cultural awareness of art materials—a professional without the training of an art therapist, such as a counselor, art teacher, or commercial artist, could make decisions harmful to members of the public if claiming to provide “art therapy.”