

**Report on National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military
National Roundtable for Arts, Health & Well-being across the Military Continuum
November 29-30, 2016**



Members of the NCCATA board received email invitations from Marete Wester, Senior Director of Arts Policy for Americans for the Arts, to attend this event in Maryland and Virginia. The National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations (NCCATA) was represented by Ronna Kaplan, NCCATA Chair; Jason Butler, President of North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA); and Jody Wager, President of the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA). Linda Condon, President of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (ASGPP), had planned to attend but was ill. We were joined by Andrea Farbman, Executive Director of the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), and Cynthia Woodruff, Executive Director of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA).

Approximately 40 individuals were in attendance, including present and past members of the military and civilians

from our organizations mentioned above and a variety of important other organizations including the following:

- Armed Forces:
 - US Air Force
 - US Army
 - US Navy
- Americans for the Arts
- American Legion
- American Red Cross
- Blue Star Families
- Corporations:
 - Johnson and Johnson
 - RAND Corporation
- Department of Defense
- Foundations:
 - Loreen Arbus Foundation
 - Bob Woodruff Foundation
- National Center for Creative Aging
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- National Endowment for the Arts Military Healing Arts Network/Partnership
- National Intrepid Center of Excellence, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center
- National Leadership Advisory Council of the NIAHM (National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military)
- Universities:
 - Drexel University Department of Creative Arts Therapies
 - Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
 - University of South Florida, Office of Military Partnerships
- USO
- Veterans Health Administration

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This event was a day and a half filled to the brim with speakers, information, dialogue, and networking. Stated goals and objectives of the roundtable were to:

1. Benchmark and report out on progress made toward actualizing the recommendations articulated in HIAHM's 2013 seminal report, *Arts, Health, and Well-Being across the Military Continuum – White Paper and Framing a National Plan for Action*
2. Outline the next key set of action steps to be taken collaboratively over the next 3 to 5 years; these steps will form the backbone of HIAHM's new Blueprint for Action
3. Formalize communications and events plan to guide NIAHM's work through 2020 to educate and engage policy leaders, decision—makers, supporters, and field activities to realize the Blueprint's goals

The 2013 document noted several areas where the arts have demonstrated impact, e.g., helping to sustain and promote troop force and family (a) *readiness*, (b) *resilience*, and (c) *retention* and subsequent successful (d) *reintegration* into family and community life.

Furthermore, the 2013 White Paper recommended strategies in the following areas:

- Research
 - Support a broad research agenda
 - Conduct needs assessment and benchmark research
 - Promote linkages and information sharing
- Practice
 - Person and family-center for life
 - Arts at every stage—from healing to wellness
 - Access for all
- Policy
 - Formal recognition
 - Strategically placed
 - Adequately resourced

More details about all these aspects listed above were provided in a Briefing Paper prepared for the November 2016 Roundtable we attended. An addendum containing additional resources accompanied the briefing paper. We believe there are numerous websites, webinars and more that could prove to be educational and functional for NCCATA member organizations to expand creative arts therapies services across the military continuum.

A tour of the National Intrepid Center for Excellence (NICoE) was enlightening, and a presentation by art therapist Melissa Walker, ATR; Girija Kaimal, EdD, Department of Creative Arts Therapies @ Drexel University; and Dr. Sarah Kass, CAPT, USN RET, the Military Clinical Advisor of Creative Forces: The NEA Military Healing Arts Partnership highlighted creative arts



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therapies and arts research. Throughout other talks and panels the arts were discussed and multiple stories that were quite moving were shared.



Overarching Issues:

Throughout the discussions, NCCATA representatives in attendance became acutely aware of some major issues, such as what core components of the process of provision of arts experiences for the military and their families are still “missing”:

1. Standard vocabulary/language/definitions about various roles of artists in healthcare across the continuum (We need to advocate, educate, and clarify these roles, as frequently throughout the roundtable, lines were blurred between creative arts therapies and other arts experiences). Definitions of the Creative Arts Therapies are in Appendix A of the White Paper, but these need to be more widely disseminated, and perhaps we need to highlight what *is* creative arts therapy and what *is not*. AMTA has a document to this end on its website.
2. Expansion of creative arts therapies services all over the country-increased access
3. All creative arts therapies professions offered in each setting where arts therapies exist (right now it appears that art therapy and music therapy are the most frequent)
4. Need for more research regarding the impact of creative arts therapies on the lives of past and present members of the military and their families
5. Commitment to families of the military

Ronna Kaplan
Donna Betts
Jason Butler
Jody Wager