

Music Therapy at Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury



ABIGAIL D'ARCANGELIS, MT-BC

Abigail joined SVWC in 2012 as its first full-time music therapist. She is responsible for the establishment of the music therapy department, providing individual and group music therapy services, establishing a music therapy internship and supervising music therapy interns and university music therapy practicum students in their training.

Prior to joining SVWC, Abigail provided music therapy for individuals ranging in age from 3 months to 103 years in settings including medical hospitals, group homes, skilled nursing facilities, schools, and psychiatric facilities. Abigail graduated from Nazareth College of Rochester, New York, with a bachelor's degree in music therapy. In addition to her Board Certification in Music Therapy, Abigail has received further specialized training in neurologic music therapy and hospice and palliative care music therapy.

What Is Music Therapy?

Music therapy is the clinical research-based application of music and therapeutic techniques by a board-certified music therapist to achieve individualized, non-musical treatment outcomes pertaining to an individual's cognitive, communicative, physical, social or emotional functioning and health.

What Is a Music Therapist?

A music therapist is a trained professional with a completed college degree in music therapy and the credential MT-BC, which denotes successful completion of the National Certification Board for Music Therapists examination and that the music therapist is board-certified. Only professionals meeting these requirements and maintaining this credential are qualified to provide music therapy.

Why Music Therapy?

From our heartbeats to a mother's lullaby, from motivation at the gym to learning the ABCs, from a song eliciting memories of a special person to tapping our toes to a good beat — most of us have experienced the connection of music and rhythm on our minds and bodies.

Neuroscience research explains that music activates and processes throughout multiple regions of the brain. It validates that music can actually affect the non-musical functions and behaviors associated with these brain regions and, in some cases, alter the brain by creating new neural pathways or strengthening old ones. We see this demonstrated in individuals previously unable to speak after a stroke, or those with an unsteady gait due to Parkinson's, presenting with marked improvement after receiving neurologic music therapy.

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Social science substantiates that music's cultural and social qualities play a role in this mind-body connection, as well as the interconnectedness of music with one's identity. Tap into one's musical preferences, and you tap into his or her culture, life experiences, sense of familiarity and self-expression. We see this in otherwise-unresponsive individuals with Alzheimer's disease becoming more oriented and engaged when presented with a meaningful song from their past.

Through fostered therapeutic rapport between client and music therapist, research synthesized with clinical application, and skillful adaptation of music and therapy by the therapist to meet individualized needs, music therapy effectively and enjoyably achieves meaningful functional changes in clients' health and wellness.

What Does Music Therapy Typically Involve?

Typically, music therapy involves:

- Facilitated clinical treatment techniques referred to as music interventions
 - Elements of creating, performing or listening to music, including active client music-making interventions or more receptive music interventions, dependent upon the treatment goal
 - Predominantly client-preferred music, when applicable
 - Treatment goals focused on improving, restoring or maintaining client functioning
- As with other clinical therapies, such as physical therapy or counseling, referral, assessment, treatment planning, implementation, documentation and interdisciplinary communication are integral components of music therapy.



Services Available at Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury Individual Music Therapy

Residents are referred to 1-on-1 music therapy to address a variety of treatment needs, including but not limited to:

- End of life (pain, respiration, creating a peaceful, familiar supportive environment, grief)
- Anxiety
- Physical functioning (neglect, gait, balance, range of motion)
- Social isolation
- Speech (word finding, speech production)
- Cognition (memory, attention)
- Adaptive Lessons with performances
- Living Legacy Audio-Biography Project
- Heartbeat Recordings

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Group Music Therapy

- Music for the Senses: To improve wake-recovery, orientation and engagement of residents living with dementia, through multi-sensory music experiences and other tactile, visual, auditory and olfactory experiences. Conducted in SVWC's Sensory Room. (HC)
- Musical Memories: To maintain cognitive ability, including short term memory, long term memory, attention and orientation, through the use of receptive music listening and active music making. (HC, BRH)
- Musical Exercise: To maintain physical wellness through active instrument play and movement to music. (HC, BRH)
- Chime Ensemble: To maintain social, emotional, cognitive, and sensorimotor wellness by participating in a hand-chime performance ensemble. (AL, HC, BRH)
- Intergenerational Music Therapy Group: To improve social interaction and emotional health through singing, movement to music and instrument play in shared musical experiences between residents and elementary students. Offered in collaboration with the Independent School of Winchester. (BRH, HC, AL)
- Musical Conversations: To maintain social, emotional and cognitive wellness through music appreciation-based discussion and viewing of recorded performances. (AL, HC)
- Neurologic Music Therapy Exercise Group: To maintain physical wellness through active instrument play. Offered in collaboration with the Greater Winchester Area Parkinson's Support Group. (Winchester community)
- Spirit Song: To maintain spiritual, emotional and social wellness through theme-based singing, readings and discussion. Offered in co-facilitation with Chaplains. (IL, AL, HC, BRH)
- Music Meditation: To develop skills for reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety through music and various mindful relaxation techniques including progressive muscle relaxation, chanting, toning, breathing exercises and guided meditation. (IL)
- Time Honored Viola: For enjoyment of classical music. Live performances offered in collaboration with BRH activities coordinator. (HC, BRH)