



CTRS®

Specialization Area Designation Spotlight



Kristen Burns

I chose to earn both the Behavioral Health and Geriatric Specialization Area Designations through NCTRC to enhance my ability to provide quality therapy to my patient population.

I knew that I wanted to specialize in my area that I ended up finding my niche. My first employment opportunity was working in a behavioral health unit serving both adults and geriatrics. I enjoyed working on the older adult unit so much, that I found a job working exclusively with them. Working as a Recreation Therapist on a Geriatric Behavioral Health unit, I decided the best choice was to pursue both specializations. They are both equal halves to my current professional responsibility.

Throughout the last five years, whenever I saw an opportunity for a CEU in Behavioral Health or Geriatrics, I took the course. I found several CEUs online and by attending a conference, and through my state Recreational Therapy Association. I also became very passionate about how Tai Chi could be beneficial for older adults when I researched and wrote my protocol for my senior project during my internship to originally receive my CTRS. My program was actually recognized by winning the I CARE award.



CTRS® Specialization Area Designation Spotlight

Kristen Burns (continued)

I became involved with the Tai Chi for Health organization and earned CEUs through learning their Tai Chi for Health program specifically for older adults with arthritis.

I advise you to set an achievable goal of breaking down the number of CEUs you will need to complete per month like I did, so you can constantly monitor your progress and adjust accordingly. As I earned my CEUs, I started a document that had all the necessary information: course title, workshop/conference/webinar, dates CEU occurred, area of NCTRC knowledge code, CEU credit amount, and program description. I often found the description in the beginning objectives of presenter PowerPoints. I definitely recommend to anyone going through this process to start a document with this information and input their progress as they earn CEUs. This will help you stay organized as you go through the process. It definitely makes the process easier if you have all of this on a separate document and fill out the NCTRC form for your CEUs as you go. This way you are not trying to find and input everything in as your deadline approaches or potentially miss something you need. Also, being involved in state and national RT/TR organizations really helped me expand upon my opportunities, open doors and helps professional growth.

I am glad that I chose to pursue and accomplish receiving both certifications for it has really helped me further my knowledge in becoming more well-rounded in my setting overall.



CTRS® Specialization Area Designation Spotlight

Kristen Burns (continued)

Several of the Behavioral Health CEUs taught me various relaxation techniques that I had never heard of before and allowed me to further expand my programs and provide more tools for my patients' tool boxes. Becoming certified in Tai Chi through gaining my CEUs in Geriatrics has helped me develop a seated tai chi program in order to meet the needs of my patients. It has also given me a better understanding of arthritis and the impacts that Tai Chi can have both mentally and physically on older adults. By taking various courses in both Behavioral Health and Geriatrics, I have learned more evidenced based practice techniques that I can utilize, as well as, stay up on best/new practices in both fields to provide the best quality programs for my patients.

Earning these certifications is motivation to me that shows me what I am capable of and encourages me to never stop learning and growing as a professional. Maintaining these certifications by continuing to attend CEUs in these areas will help me continue to hone my therapeutic counseling techniques to offer the best quality of care of my patients. I look forward to learning new interventions and finding new ways to adapt to the cognitive decline my patients often have. I also look forward to continuing to provide interventions that improve patients' mental health, overall quality of life, versus just a diversion. You can "teach old dogs new tricks." The more I continue my education within these specializations, the more I learn to provide the best quality of care for patients.



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Kristen Burns (continued)

For other practitioners, who are as passionate as me for continuing to develop your skills, I recommend taking advantage of the opportunities for specialization area designations. You never know what doors this will open.



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to learn more about
Specialization Area Designations**