



Play Therapy Competencies

APT Professional Credentialing Program

APT identifies the following areas of competencies as essential to the competent practice of play therapy, irrespective of theoretical orientation:

Competency 1: Knowledge & Understanding of Play Therapy

The play therapist will:

- 1a.** Demonstrate knowledge of the history of play therapy
- 1b.** Demonstrate understanding of the therapeutic powers of play
- 1c.** Demonstrate knowledge of the therapeutic relationship in play therapy
- 1d.** Demonstrate knowledge of seminal/historically significant play therapy theories and models
- 1e.** Apply theories and stages of childhood development in play therapy
- 1f.** Identify and apply ethical practices in play therapy
- 1g.** Demonstrate an understanding of the play therapy treatment process (e.g., treatment goals and plans, documentation, intake/termination, and tracking of treatment progress)
- 1h.** Demonstrate knowledge of family & systemic theories in play therapy
- 1i.** Demonstrate knowledge of childhood-related problems and mental health diagnosis/disorders
- 1j.** Demonstrate an understanding of the diverse impacts of childhood trauma (e.g., neurobiological, systemic, social) and the implications in play therapy
- 1k.** Demonstrate knowledge of assessment in play therapy

Competency 2: Clinical Play Therapy Skills

The play therapist will:

- 2a.** Apply and articulate the therapeutic powers of play
- 2b.** Demonstrate relationship and rapport building skills (e.g., empathy, safety, unconditional positive regard) by utilizing 'self' in relationships with children, caregivers, stakeholders in play therapy
- 2c.** Apply assessments that highlight various aspects of the child and/or system and the play therapy process (e.g. conceptualization, diagnosis, family dynamics, treatment suitability and effectiveness, termination)
- 2d.** Articulate and explain the play therapy process
- 2e.** Demonstrate basic play therapy skills (e.g., tracking, reflection of feeling, limit setting, pacing with the client)
- 2f.** Identify play dynamics (e.g., types of play, themes, stages) and incorporate clinical considerations in treatment
- 2g.** Develop play therapy treatment goals and plans congruent with theoretical orientation
- 2h.** Demonstrate understanding of own cultural and social identity and its influence in the play therapy process
- 2i.** Exhibit multicultural orientation to diversity, equity, and inclusion through a culturally and socially diverse playroom and play therapy process
- 2j.** Demonstrate play therapy treatment skills congruent with theoretical orientation (e.g., conceptualization, interventions)

Competency 3: Professional Engagement in Play Therapy

The play therapist will:

- 3a.** Maintain play therapy credentials and involvement in professional play therapy organizations
- 3b.** Consistently evaluate and adjust play therapy practices to meet state and discipline ethical guidelines and codes
- 3c.** Apply ongoing integration of APT's guidelines within the Best Practices and Paper on Touch
- 3d.** Recognize and adhere to the limits of professional scope of competence in play therapy
- 3e.** Seek and integrate play therapy-specific continued education, research, and literature
- 3f.** Seek and integrate play therapy-specific supervision and consultation
- 3g.** Practice self-care to maintain quality play therapy services
- 3h.** Seek and integrate ongoing knowledge regarding cultural and social diversity in play therapy

Turner, R., Schoeneberg, C., Ray, D., & Lin, Y. (2020). Establishing play therapy competencies: A Delphi study. *International Journal of Play Therapy*. 29(4), 177–190. <https://dx.org/10.1037/pla0000138>