

# Arts in Health GLOSSARY

*This glossary compiles working definitions of core concepts in the field of Arts in Health.*

**Arts in Health.** A diverse, multidisciplinary field dedicated to transforming health and the healthcare experience through the arts — integrating literary, performing, and visual arts and design, and other forms of creative expression into a variety of healthcare and community settings to enhance health and well-being in diverse institutional and community contexts. *(NOAH, 2017)*

**Artist.** Someone who regularly engages in artistic or cultural practice to express themselves with the intention of communicating richly to or sharing with others; pass on traditional knowledge and cultural practices; offer cultural resources to their communities; and/or co-organize and co-create within communities toward social impacts — working individually, collaboratively, or as educators. They may work in one or more modalities, including drama, dance, and music; visual arts, design, and craft; online, digital, and electronic arts; community and cultural festivals; and literature, storytelling, spoken word, and creative writing. They may also be known as a culture bearer or culture maker. *(Creatives Rebuild New York, 2025; Davies & Clift, 2022)*

**Artist Engagement (Active and Receptive).** During active arts engagements, participants are overtly or directly making, performing, or creating art. Receptive arts engagement includes experiencing, attending, listening to, or viewing art. *(Davies & Clift, 2022)*

**Artist in Residence.** A professional artist who uses their highly developed arts skills to develop creative work or to create, implement, and adapt art activities for individuals and groups in diverse service environments. The role implies a long-term project or collaborative relationship with the sponsoring organization. In institutional and community environments promoting health and healing, the artist in residence collaborates with health-focused professionals to enhance the service environment and facilitate creative engagement that supports goals for participant and community health and well-being. *(NOAH, 2025)*

**Arts in Health Administrators.** Professionals who provide expertise to design, assess, manage, and guide the arts in health programs and staff they supervise. *(NOAH Core Curriculum)*

**Arts in Healthcare** — The application of arts, cultural, and creative practices within clinical and healthcare settings to support the health, well-being, and social connection of patients, families, and staff, and to enhance the healing environment. *(NOAH, 2025)*

**Arts in Public Health.** An emerging discipline where public health intersects with arts and culture. It engages arts and cultural practices for health promotion, prevention, communication, and well-being in communities outside of clinical settings. *(NOAH, 2025)*

**Arts Participation.** Engagement across a wide range of art forms — including the performing arts; visual arts, design, and craft; community and cultural festivals and events; literature; and media arts, among others — as well as culturally-rooted traditions and rituals, and innovative creative processes that engage imagination, self-expression, and meaning-making. *(Sonke et al., 2023)*

**Arts Prescribing.** A subset of social prescribing (also referred to as arts on prescription) in which healthcare workers or community helpers connect people to local support services, including arts and cultural programs, to augment medical treatment — together creating a non-medical, social prescription to improve health and community connection. *(Muhl et al., 2023)*

**Creative Arts Therapies.** The clinical and evidence-based use of the arts within a therapeutic relationship — art therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, psychodrama, and poetry/bibliotherapy — relying on experiential and action-based interventions. Each profession follows a code of professional practice/ethics, has a legally defensible scope of practice and standards, requires supervised clinical training, and maintains credentialing and an evidence base. Each is governed by a separate professional association with a unique scope of practice. *(de Witte et al., 2021; NCCATA, n.d.)*

**Creative Health.** Creative approaches and activities that have benefits for our health and well-being. Creative health helps to prevent ill-health, promotes health and well-being, and aids the management of long-term conditions,

treatment, and recovery across the life course; it can strengthen social cohesion and reduce health inequalities. Activities can include the visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, cooking, and creative activities in nature. (*National Centre for Creative Health / All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (UK)*)

**Evidence-Based.** An approach to practice that relies on the best available research, professional expertise, and participant experience to guide decision-making. Evidence-based Arts in Health programs demonstrate effectiveness through research and evaluation (qualitative and quantitative) that is rigorous, appropriate, systematic, trustworthy, and transparent. In the NOAH Code of Ethics, evidence-based decision-making is described as integrating individual expertise with peer-reviewed, scientific evidence. (*Davies & Clift, 2022; NOAH, 2023*)

**Expressive Arts Therapy.** The purposeful application and integration of art, music, dance/movement, dramatic enactment, creative writing, and imaginative play into an action-oriented and sensory-based form of psychotherapy — part of the continuum of somatic practices in work with traumatic stress, attachment problems, addictions, and other health challenges. (*Malchiodi, 2023*)

**Guest Artist.** An artist who visits an Arts in Health service environment as an escorted guest to share their arts, cultural, and creative practices through performances, exhibits, installations, and other projects. Guest artists may not have Arts in Health training but bring significant artistic skill to the service environment. (*NOAH, 2025*)

**Health.** A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (*World Health Organization, 1946*)

**Neuroarts.** The transdisciplinary study of how the arts and aesthetic experiences measurably change the body, brain, and behavior, and how this knowledge is translated into specific practices that advance health and well-being. An emerging field at the crossroads of science, technology, and the arts. (*NeuroArts Blueprint — Johns Hopkins International Arts + Mind Lab & Aspen Institute, 2021*)

**Scope of Practice.** The defined range of responsibilities and activities that professionals — particularly in health care — are authorized and qualified to perform, ensuring that individuals practice within their level of training and expertise to safeguard public health and safety. (*Keenan, 2023; NOAH, 2025*)

**Social Prescribing** — A process in which healthcare workers or community connectors link people to non-medical, community-based support services to address their health and well-being. (*Muhl et al., 2023*)

**Teaching Artist.** A practicing, professional artist who teaches and integrates their art form, perspectives, histories, and skills into a wide range of learning settings. Also known as arts educators, culture bearers, or community artists. (*Booth, 2009*)

**Therapeutic Musician.** A practitioner trained to assess a patient's behavior, condition, and communication ability in order to meet the patient's immediate needs with appropriate therapeutic music, using the artistic application of the intrinsic elements of live music and sound to provide an environment conducive to the healing process. (*National Association of Therapeutic Musicians, 2025*)

**Therapy.** A systematic intervention delivered by a qualified professional that applies clinical or evidence-based methods to support healing, recovery, or improved functioning in response to physical, cognitive, emotional, or social challenges. Therapies may include medical, psychological, or creative modalities, each grounded in structured processes designed to promote health and well-being. (*WHO, 2021*)

**Treatment.** An intervention delivered by health professionals to address pathological conditions, with the intent to alleviate symptoms, manage disease progression, or achieve cure. (*Science Direct, n.d.*)

**Well-Being.** A multidimensional construct that broadly relates to how people experience, perceive, or evaluate the quality or condition of their life, which can be measured by subjective and objective data and assessed through validated scales. (*Davies & Clift, 2022*)