

# Implementation of Creative Arts Therapies Across the Defense Intrepid Network

## PROJECT GOAL

*CAT Implementation* aims to assess how Creative Arts Therapies can benefit military patients experiencing psychological distress. It also seeks to identify and overcome barriers to utilization of the creative arts therapies.

## BACKGROUND

The Defense Intrepid Network sites have used creative arts therapies, including art therapy, music therapy, and dance movement therapy, since 2010. However, the research on the effectiveness and implementation of creative arts therapies, particularly within military populations, is limited.

## STUDY DESIGN

The project has two main objectives. First, we aim to examine the implementation of the creative arts therapies within the Military Health System, and in particular the Defense Intrepid Network. Additionally, in collaboration with the Research Working Group established through this effort and Creative Forces, we will develop infrastructure to facilitate future studies of the creative arts therapies for military connected individuals.

## CURRENT STATUS

The systematic review is in progress. Additionally, the site visit IRB is in development and will be approved in advance of the site visits beginning February 2026.

## FUNDING

*CAT Implementation*, led by Dr. Maegan Willing in collaboration with the Defense Intrepid Network, is funded intramurally by USU (\$894,162). The project will be conducted from September 2024 through September 2027.

### Implementation of Creative Arts Therapies

*To evaluate the implementation of creative arts therapies within the Military Health System, we will:*

- Conduct site visits across the Defense Intrepid Network ( $N = 13$ )
  - Interviews with creative arts therapists
  - Focus groups with providers, administrators, and leadership
- Survey non-DIN creative arts therapists ( $N = 60$ ) and providers ( $N = 100$ )

*Utilizing the Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC) framework, we will:*

- Develop solutions for the identified barriers
- Identify opportunities for growth within the creative arts therapies program
- Perform implementation mapping

### Develop Infrastructure for Creative Arts Therapies Research

Conduct systematic review of research on creative arts therapies brain injuries and psychological health conditions

Identify process & outcome measures for each creative arts therapy

Pilot measures within the Defense Intrepid Network

Develop research priorities for each creative arts therapy

Facilitate a scholars program to create partnerships for future studies