



Credentialing Standards for the Registered Play Therapist™

APT Professional Credentialing Program

2025

This revision is effective as of **April 1, 2025** and supersedes all previous versions.

APT may revise its Credentialing Program and its criteria, standards, process, and other aspects of the program at its sole discretion.

Credentialing Standards for the Registered Play Therapist™ Credential

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Essential Credentialing Documents Housed Online

Glossary of Terms	online
Competencies	online
Application Denial, Complaints, and Appeals	online
Reinstatement Application	online

All approval determinations are made at the sole discretion of APT based on all information received and reviewed, and that APT may approve or deny applications or renewals based on any and all information received by it during the application and renewal process or otherwise, including information that may be obtained independently or from third parties.

Credentialing Standards for the Registered Play Therapist™ Credential

Mission

To promote the value of play, play therapy, and credentialed play therapists by advancing the development of mental health of all people including emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. As a diverse, equitable, and inclusive professional organization, we embrace:

- Increased appreciation of play and play therapy by the public
- Ethical practice of play therapy informed by research, education, and training
- Recognition of education grounded in seminal and historically significant play therapy theories

Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As an integral component of our organization, APT is committed to achieving and maintaining a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We are at our best when the principles of DEI are fully embedded in our governance, leadership, and organizational policies. Our unwavering goal is to generate programs and processes resulting in ongoing meaningful and sustainable organizational change toward DEI.

As part of this commitment, APT made DEI additions to the credentialing program in 2023. These changes can be seen in the educational requirements of the RPT™ Credential as well as in the continuing education requirements.

APT credentials are conferred without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin.

Program Intent

The intent of the APT Credentialing Program is to develop national standards for the competent practice of play therapy and the provision of play therapy supervision. We confer the Registered Play Therapist™ (RPT™), Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor™ (RPT-S™), and School Based-Registered Play Therapist™ (SB-RPT™) credentials upon those who meet these national standards to help consumers identify licensed clinical mental health professionals, with specialized training and experience in play therapy. The credential focuses on promoting professional accountability and requires ongoing professional growth and development that ultimately improve mental health services to the most vulnerable populations, especially children.

This is accomplished by integrating play therapy instruction, clinical experience, and supervision in a sequential three-phase approach that builds upon a completed graduate degree, and requires depth and breadth of play therapy instruction, experience, and supervision to ensure competencies in this specialty.

Sequential Three-Phase Approach

APT has developed a three-phase approach for the appropriate obtention and documentation of play therapy instruction, clinical experience, and supervision that provides the optimal training experience (intentionality and integration) for developing well-rounded play therapy clinicians.

The three-phase approach is in line with the educational/developmental model of how psychotherapists develop in knowledge, skills, and personal capacities. To obtain competency in the practice of play therapy, direct instruction must be followed by periods of application to clinical cases accompanied by supervision.

Successful completion of the credentialing requirements demonstrates the following:

- Play Therapy Instruction, Supervised Play Therapy Experience, and Play Therapy Supervision requirements must each be accrued over a period of no less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years. That is to say, each of these three components must individually span at least two years of accrual. Additionally, all credentialing requirements must have been obtained with the ten (10) years immediately preceding the date on which your application is received by APT.

- Credentialing requirements are intended to be integrated across phases. Although play therapy instruction may begin prior to the initiation of supervision, applicants are required to continue accruing play therapy instruction hours throughout the training process, as recommended by their Registered Play Therapist–Supervisor™ (RPT-S™) and/or as required to meet the minimum hours within the primary instructional content areas.
- Each phase requires the completion and documentation of a minimum number of hours in play therapy instruction, supervised clinical experience, and supervision prior to progressing to the next phase.
- All three phases must be completed before submitting application.

This sequential and integrated process is designed to ensure the acquisition of comprehensive knowledge of the theories and clinical skills required for the competent practice of play therapy.

Application & Annual Fees

Applications are welcome upon the completion and documentation of all credentialing requirements. An RPT™ application will remain open for a maximum of 12 months after review of the application to permit the applicant to address any deficiencies identified during the review process. Once earned, the credential must be renewed annually. Play therapy specific continuing education is due every 3-years (see **Section 09** for renewal criteria and process) to maintain the RPT™ Credential.

Applicants must first apply for, be granted, and maintain the RPT™ credential in good standing, without lapse, for the **three (3) most recent consecutive years** prior to applying for the RPT-S™ credential.

RPT™ Application Fee		RPT™ Annual Renewal Fee	
Member	Non-Member	Member	Non-Member
\$210.00	\$340.00	\$ 70.00	\$190.00

Application fees: The non-refundable application fee of \$210.00 (or \$340 for non-members), includes complimentary initial 12-month activation fee upon approval. Nonmembers interested in joining APT may include membership fees with this application.

Annual Renewal fees: Renewal fees are billed and due annually upon your anniversary date (see **Section 09** for renewal criteria and process). APT Membership is applied for, and billed separately from Credentialing fees.

RPT™ Application Instructions

1. Review the Credentialing Standards. APT reserves the right to unilaterally revise, from time to time, the terms and conditions, this Guide, governing policies, approval and renewal criteria, and other facets of this agreement.
2. Complete, sign, and date the application, including attestation.
3. Include copies of the following:
 - a. Copy of current and active mental health license.
 - b. Copy of graduate university transcripts.
 - c. Three completed and signed Criteria Verification Forms, with all supporting documents attached (including play therapy certificates).

4. Applications **must be submitted in hard copy** format by USPS or courier (UPS, FedEx, etc.) to the address below. Applications received via email or fax will not be accepted.

Association for Play Therapy
401 Clovis Avenue, Suite 107
Clovis, CA 93612
559-298-3400, info@a4pt.org

You will receive a confirmation email from APT upon receipt of your application. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. APT will notify applicants within 10-12 weeks via email regarding the status of their application. Should there be a change in your licensure status at any time during the application process or once approved, you are required to immediately notify APT in writing.

If after reviewing the Credentialing Standards you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Program Criteria Overview

This chart summarizes the criteria that applicants must satisfy to earn the RPT™ credential. The criteria are designed to ensure well-rounded education and training in play therapy.

Successful completion of the credentialing criteria includes the completion and documentation of a minimum number of hours in play therapy instruction, clinical experience, and supervision in a three-phase approach. See **Section 06** for additional information on the integration of these criteria.

Section	Credentialing Criteria						
01 - License	Required to hold a current, active, and unconditional individual state license to independently provide clinical mental health services in one of the following general practice disciplines: counseling, marriage and family therapy, psychiatry, psychology, or social work.						
02 - Educational Degree	Required to hold a master's or higher clinical mental health degree in one of the following disciplines: counseling, marriage and family therapy, psychiatry, psychology, or social work with demonstrated coursework in: child development; theories of personality; principles of psychotherapy; child & adolescent psychopathology; cultural & social diversity; and ethics.						
03 - Play Therapy Instruction	Required to include documentation of at least 150 hours of play therapy specific instruction, accrued in a time period of no less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years from accredited universities or APT Approved Providers. Limits to the number of non-contact hours and additional stipulations are listed in Section 03. <table><tr><td>Phase 1-Instruction</td><td>Phase 2-Instruction</td><td>Phase 3-Instruction</td></tr><tr><td>Document 35-55 hours</td><td>Document 55-70 hours</td><td>Document 45-60 hours</td></tr></table> See Section 03 for primary areas that must be covered within each phase.	Phase 1-Instruction	Phase 2-Instruction	Phase 3-Instruction	Document 35-55 hours	Document 55-70 hours	Document 45-60 hours
Phase 1-Instruction	Phase 2-Instruction	Phase 3-Instruction					
Document 35-55 hours	Document 55-70 hours	Document 45-60 hours					
04 - Supervised Play Therapy Experience	Required to include documentation of a minimum of 350 direct client contact hours, under the supervision of a Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor™ (RPT-S™). <table><tr><td>Phase 1-Experience</td><td>Phase 2-Experience</td><td>Phase 3-Experience</td></tr><tr><td>Document 50-75 hours</td><td>Document 100-150 hours</td><td>Document 100-175 hours</td></tr></table> See Section 04 for additional information on the appropriate acquisition of play therapy experience.	Phase 1-Experience	Phase 2-Experience	Phase 3-Experience	Document 50-75 hours	Document 100-150 hours	Document 100-175 hours
Phase 1-Experience	Phase 2-Experience	Phase 3-Experience					
Document 50-75 hours	Document 100-150 hours	Document 100-175 hours					
05 - Play Therapy Supervision	Required to include documentation of a minimum of 35 hours of play therapy supervision and five (5) session observations during the accumulation of the supervised play therapy experience. <table><tr><td>Phase 1-Supervision</td><td>Phase 2-Supervision</td><td>Phase 3-Supervision</td></tr><tr><td>Document 5-10 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 1 session.</td><td>Document 10-15 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 2 sessions.</td><td>Document 10-20 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 2 sessions.</td></tr></table> See Section 05 for additional information on supervision guidelines.	Phase 1-Supervision	Phase 2-Supervision	Phase 3-Supervision	Document 5-10 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 1 session.	Document 10-15 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 2 sessions.	Document 10-20 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 2 sessions.
Phase 1-Supervision	Phase 2-Supervision	Phase 3-Supervision					
Document 5-10 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 1 session.	Document 10-15 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 2 sessions.	Document 10-20 hours and supervisor must view/observe at least 2 sessions.					

For answers to frequently asked questions, please visit the [FAQ page](#) on the APT Website.

Once earned, the credential must be renewed annually. Play therapy specific continuing education is due every 3-years (see **Section 09** for renewal criteria and process) to maintain the RPT™ Credential.

Section 01 – Verification of License

Attach a copy of your current, active, and unconditional state mental health license in the general practice fields of counseling, marriage and family therapy, psychiatry, psychology, or social work indicating you are legally permitted to independently provide clinical mental health services. An add-on specialty license (e.g., addictions, art therapy, dance/movement therapy, art therapy counseling, etc.) is not acceptable in lieu of a clinical mental health license in any of the aforementioned general practice disciplines.

APT only accepts licenses that are unconditionally issued by an authority that promulgates mental health standards and practices and that investigates and penalizes violations of such standards and practices. Licenses that are limited, conditional, or restricted in any way are not accepted. Should there be a change in your licensure status at any time during the application process or once approved, you are required to immediately notify APT in writing.

A clinical license should include two (2) years and 2,000 direct client contact hours of supervised clinical mental health experience.

APT confers “practitioner credentials.” If you are a practitioner, you must maintain an active license in the state in which you practice. It is your responsibility to update the licensure expiration date in your credentialing profile upon renewal of your license.

If you are not currently practicing, you must hold an active license issued by a state licensing board whether or not you are practicing or residing in that state in order to maintain the RPT™ credential.

Section 02 - Verification of Graduate Degrees and Core Content Coursework

Applicants must hold a master's or higher clinical mental health degree in one of the following general practice disciplines: counseling, marriage and family therapy, psychiatry, psychology, or social work. Please be advised that add-on specialties (e.g., addictions, art therapy, dance/movement therapy, etc.) or specialized degrees (e.g., dance therapy, art therapy counseling) cannot be substituted for a general clinical mental health degree in any of the aforementioned general practice disciplines. Attach a copy of your graduate transcript(s) issued by an accredited university and list specific courses that meet each of the core areas on the credentialing application. The date your graduate degree was conferred must be clearly visible.

Your transcripts must indicate that you have completed coursework in these six (6) required core areas:

1. Child Development
2. Theories of Personality
3. Principles of Psychotherapy
4. Child and Adolescent Psychopathology
5. Cultural & Social Diversity
6. Legal, Ethical, and Professional Issues

Applicants must document a minimum of six (6) graduate-level courses to satisfy the six (6) core content area requirements. Each course may be applied to only one core content area; however, multiple courses may be used to fulfill a single core content area. Courses used to fulfill the required core content areas cannot be applied toward the 150-hour play therapy instruction requirement. Keep in mind that course titles may not always match the exact names of the APT's core areas. **Table 2.1** offers examples of potential graduate course titles and descriptions for each core content area.

Table 2.1 – Core Content Areas

Required Core Content Area	Course Descriptions and Examples
Child Development	This content area on lifespan development covers how humans learn, mature, and adapt from infancy to adulthood to elderly phases of life (e.g., Life Span Development, Human Behavior in Social Environment – HBSE I).
Theories of Personality	This content will cover a variety of personality theories, their history, and applications (e.g., Counseling Theories, HBSE II).
Principles of Psychotherapy	In this content area, the counseling process and skills are discussed through an array of theories (e.g., Counseling Process & Skills, Social Work Practice, Pre-practicum).
Child & Adolescent Psychopathology	The types and symptomology of mental disorders, their assessment, treatment, and related research in psychotherapy for the disorders are covered in this content area (e.g., Abnormal Psychology or Behavior, HBSE III, DSM, Diagnosis & Treatment, Mental Emotional & Behavioral Disorders).
Cultural & Social Diversity <i>(Coursework must address global concepts of diversity)</i>	A foundational course covering key diversity concepts, including types of diversity, multicultural counseling theories (e.g., critical race theory, relational-cultural theory), identity development, power differences (e.g., privilege, marginalization, and oppression), visible/invisible minority status, intersectionality, social justice, advocacy, etc.
Legal, Ethical, and Professional Issues	This content area introduces ethical principles, professional guidelines, and issues pertaining to special groups (e.g., Intro into the Profession, SW Policy and Issues).

If you would like assistance in determining whether your academic program covered the six (6) content areas listed above prior to submitting your application, please complete the [Transcript Review form](#) available on our website.

Section 03 - Verification of Play Therapy Instruction

Applicants are required to complete 150 hour of play therapy specific instruction in five (5) primary areas, during the simultaneous or sequential completion of both play therapy experience and supervision, in a three-phase approach. See **Table 3.1**.

Please review the training materials for each workshop and use your best clinical judgment to allocate hours across the various primary areas. Often, a single training will address multiple primary areas.

Table 3.1 – Play Therapy Primary Areas

Primary Areas	Minimum number of hours	Must be completed in Phase 1	Must be completed in Phase 2	Must be completed in Phase 3
1 - Play Therapy History	5	Play Therapy History hours may be completed in Phase 1, 2, or 3.		
2 - Play Therapy Seminal or Historically Significant Theories At least 25 hours must be in one Seminal or Historically Significant Theory.	55	20-30	25-30	10-15
3 - Play Therapy Skills and Methods The hours earned in skills and methods should be based on seminal or historically significant theories studied.	50	10-20	25-30	15-20
4 - Play Therapy Special Topics Includes special populations and burgeoning models.	25	0-5	5-10	20-25
5 - Play Therapy Cultural and Social Diversity Topics Coursework must address global and/or specific concepts of diversity. See Terms .	6	Play Therapy Cultural and Social Diversity may be completed in Phase 1, 2, or 3.		
Applicant's Choice The additional 9 hours may be earned in any of the categories listed above.	9	The remaining 9 hours may be completed in any of the categories, during any phase.		
Total:	150	35-55	55-70	45-60

Although [Play Therapy Cultural and Social Diversity](#) is listed as a separate primary area, it may be covered a) in a stand-alone course/workshop or b) integrated within the other four (4) primary areas.

Seminal Theories and their Derivatives

In order to preserve and strengthen the credentialing program, APT wishes to distinguish seminal theories and historically significant theories that were derived from them, which have had a lasting impact and have stood the test of time, from newer theories or approaches that have emerged in more recent years and have not yet proven their significance, though they may at some point with more time and empirical evidence.

Play Therapy - Seminal Theories and Historically Significant Theories

APT recognizes the following three major branches as seminal theories to the field of play therapy: Cognitive-Behavioral, Humanistic, and Psychodynamic.

APT recognizes the following 10 historically significant theories to the field of play therapy:

1. Adlerian
2. Child-Centered
3. Cognitive-Behavioral
4. Developmental (Viola Brody)
5. Ecosystemic
6. Filial – although not a theory, this approach is historically significant.
7. Gestalt
8. Jungian
9. Object-Relations
10. Theraplay – although not a theory, this approach is historically significant.

To ensure instruction, clinical experience, and supervision are integrated:

- Instruction should be ongoing and in conjunction with (simultaneous or sequential) play therapy experience and supervision in each phase.
- Instructional hours must be accrued in a time period of no less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years.
- Applicant's play therapy coursework and trainings must demonstrate a well-rounded education in more than one play therapy seminal or historically significant theory.
- Both Play Therapy Seminal or Historically Significant Theory and Play Therapy Cultural and Social Diversity primary areas are integrated in the play therapy instruction and supervised experience requirements.
- Hours earned in skills and methods should be based on the theoretical model studied.
- A maximum of eight (8) hours of instruction per day will be accepted.
- Effective April 1, 2025, of the 150 hours of play therapy instruction, **a minimum of 75 hours must be met by contact** (in-person) training. The remaining 75 hours may be earned via contact or non-contact training. All webinars, including live webinars are counted as non-contact training. See [Terms](#) for definition of each.

Type of Training	Minimum Required	Maximum Allowed
Contact/in-person training	75	No maximum
Non-contact trainings (all webinars including live webinars)	No minimum	75

Play Therapy Graduate Coursework and Continuing Education

To meet this requirement, APT accepts:

1. Graduate coursework, specific to play therapy from accredited universities when the applicant is a matriculated student at the university. If applicant is not a matriculated student, hours are counted as continuing education. See **Table 3.2**.
2. Continuing education specific to play therapy from APT Approved Providers in good standing at the time of the CE workshop. See **Table 3.2**.
3. **Please do not submit original certificates with your application.** Instead, only provide copies of your certificates, as any original documents submitted will be permanently destroyed during the application processing and will not be returned.

Table 3.2 – Play Therapy Instruction

Graduate Coursework	Continuing Education from an APT Approved Provider
Each graduate course semester credit equals 22.5 hours of play therapy instruction.	One hour of instruction equals one clock hour.
Not more than 135 clock hours may be earned from the same instructor.	Not more than 100 clock hours may be earned from the same instructor.
A copy of course syllabus & transcript is required for all play therapy graduate courses you wish considered towards this requirement.	Completion certificate must display the sponsor's APT Approved Provider number (i.e., APT Approved Provider XX-XXX).

Items not eligible for instructional credit include but are not limited to:

1. Presentations and/or coursework taught or written by applicant.
2. Clock hours earned from graduate internships and practicum (may be included in **Section 04**).

See **Section 06** for detailed instructions on the documentation of play therapy instruction.

The Association for Play Therapy (APT) reserves the right to require applicants to complete additional training specifically focused on play therapy if their submitted documentation does not demonstrate sufficient instruction in the five (5) core areas of study. These primary areas include: the history of play therapy, seminal or historically significant theories in play therapy, essential play therapy skills and methods, cultural and social diversity considerations in play therapy, and specialized topics relevant to the field. Applicants must ensure that their training comprehensively covers these areas to meet APT's play therapy instruction requirement.

Section 04 - Verification of Supervised Play Therapy Experience

Play therapy experience must be obtained under the supervision (or consultation – see [Terms](#)) of an RPT- S™ who is recognized by their licensing boards as eligible to supervise; expected to know and abide by their respective ethics and standards; subject to disciplinary action by their respective licensing boards and accountable for the actions of their supervisees. **See Table 4.1.**

In order to ensure instruction, clinical experience, and supervision are integrated:

- Applicants must complete a minimum of **350 hours of direct play therapy experience** and **35 hours of simultaneous supervision** in three phases.
- Supervised play therapy experience hours must be accrued in a time period of no less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years.
- Through the supervised play therapy experience, applicants are expected to demonstrate play therapy competencies (competencies listed in **Section 05**).

Table 4.1 – Play Therapy Experience

Supervised Play Therapy Experience	Must be completed in Phase 1	Must be completed in Phase 2	Must be completed in Phase 3	Minimum number of hours
Direct Client Contact Hours required in each phase	50-75	100-150	100-175	350

The three-phase approach permits the applicant to adequately absorb and synthesize play therapy instruction obtained into their supervised play therapy experience at a more manageable pace.

To obtain competency, assessment of the supervisee's play therapy knowledge and skills is essential. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to share with their supervisor attendance certificates or graduate transcripts for play therapy instruction received while under supervision. This interchange helps inform the supervisory process and aids in the integration of the acquired knowledge through demonstrated practice. Attendees are encouraged to seek play therapy-specific education which supports and integrates material related to APT's core competencies.

Section 05 - Verification of Play Therapy Supervision

To provide play therapy supervision, supervisors must hold the RPT-S™ credential; be recognized by their licensing board as eligible to supervise; expected to know and abide by their respective ethics and standards; subject to disciplinary action by their respective licensing boards and accountable for the actions of their supervisees. In some situations, peer supervision or ongoing consultation may be used to meet this requirement. Play Therapy Supervision is required to occur in three separate but integrated phases.

To ensure instruction, clinical experience, and supervision are integrated:

- Applicants must complete a minimum of **35 hours of play therapy supervision** and **350 hours of simultaneous play therapy experience**.
- Play Therapy Supervision hours must be accrued in a time period of no less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years.
- Supervision should be received at a ratio of 1 to 10. One hour of supervision for every 10 hours of play therapy experience.
- A minimum of five (5) session observations are required in order to meet the supervision requirement.
- In accordance with APT's [Play Therapy Best Practices](#), applicants demonstrate a [multicultural orientation](#) that encompasses cultural humility, cultural comfort and cultural opportunities specific to play therapy treatment with diverse populations through ongoing training.

Table 5.1 – Play Therapy Supervision

Play Therapy Supervision	Must be completed in Phase 1	Must be completed in Phase 2	Must be completed in Phase 3	Minimum number of hours
Hours required in each phase	5-10	10-15	10-20	35
Session observations required in each phase	1	2	2	5

Play Therapy Supervision

Types of Supervision:

1. Individual Supervision: Consists of one supervisor and one supervisee.
2. Group Supervision: Consists of one supervisor and at least two but not more than 10 supervisees. Maximum group hours accepted is 15 of the 35.
3. Individual in Group Supervision: You may obtain individual supervision hours within a group only if focus was on your play therapy case notes, reports, or session video and does not exceed 10 supervisees. There is no limit to the number of hours that may be obtained in this manner.
4. Contact or In-Person Supervision: Occurs when you meet in-person with your supervisor to discuss case notes, reports, session video, or by simultaneously but separately watching and discussing your session video. There is no limit to the number of hours that you may obtain in this manner.
5. Non-Contact or Distance Supervision: Occurs when you meet with your supervisor via telephone or online to discuss your play therapy case notes, reports, or session video. There is no limit to the number of hours that you may obtain in this manner.

Play Therapy Consultation

Consultation differs from supervision in that the 'supervisor' and 'supervisee' both hold individual clinical mental health licenses issued by their respective state licensing boards that permit for independent practice. In consultation, the 'supervisor' is asked to share *expert advice* specific to play therapy to the existing competent care being provided by the 'supervisee.' This type of 'peer supervision' or on-going consultation may meet APT Credentialing requirements.

Supervisor Observations

Supervisor observations are necessary to assess the supervisee's competencies, qualifications, professionalism, and other matters germane to the practice of play therapy. **A minimum of five (5) session observations are required for the successful completion of the supervision requirement.** See **Table 5.1** for specific phase requirements.

It is beneficial to both supervisor and supervisee if observations take place at different stages during the therapeutic relationship. Supervisors providing ten (10) or more hours of supervision must observe at least one (1) play therapy session.

The observation requirement may be met via in-person observation, two-way mirror, videotaped, audiotaped, telehealth, transcribed session, or mock/role-play session.

Supervisee Required Competencies

It is the supervisor's obligation to identify gaps in knowledge and/or skill sets, to provide recommendations for remediation, when necessary, and to protect the integrity of the play therapy field and the vulnerable children and families play therapists serve. This is achieved through the formal assessment of supervisees' play therapy competencies. Multicultural orientation is of specific importance because it allows for the provision of play therapy services to underrepresented or marginalized groups.

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

During each phase, supervision should include discussion and assessment based on these competencies. Applicant should meet all competencies by the completion of Phase 3.

Section 06 - Integration of Play Therapy Instruction, Experience and Supervision

APT believes in the importance of providing competent care to clients and ensuring that the RPT™ credentials represent quality play therapy services by the holder. To these ends, the three-phase approach was developed to accomplish two outcomes. First, to provide a process for applicants to obtain play therapy competency through the intentional integration of direct instruction (**Section 03**) followed by periods of application to clinical cases (**Section 04**) accompanied by supervision (**Section 05**). Second, to provide a process for documenting the successful achievement of these criteria (RPT™ Credentialing Application).

Therefore, applicants must demonstrate through documentation on the Criteria Verification Forms found in the RPT™ Credentialing Application that play therapy instructional, clinical experience, and supervision hours were earned:

- within a time period of no less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years;
- in three distinct, but sequential phases with a minimum number of hours in each criterion met prior to progressing to the next phase;
- in the primary and competency areas outlined in each phase;
- all three phases must be completed before submitting application; and
- all credentialing requirements must have been obtained with the ten (10) years immediately preceding the date on which your application is received by APT.

Table 6.1 provides specific information on the required hours in each criterion per Phase. Applicants may document additional hours per Phase, but APT will accept no more than the maximum hours allotted per criterion as indicated in **Table 6.1**.

Instructions for Completion of Criteria Verification Form

Applicant must use the appropriate **Criteria Verification Form** in the RPT™ Credentialing Application to document the necessary hours completed for each criterion during each of three phases. No more than the maximum number of hours indicated in each criterion will be accepted. “Applicant’s Choice” provides an option of obtaining 9 hours of play therapy instruction in any of the Primary Areas of the applicant’s choosing.

- **Applicant’s name** must be included on each phase form.
- **Date range** should identify the time period in which the play therapy instruction, experience, and supervision was completed by applicant. The date range on each Criteria Verification form may not overlap.
- **Section A** – Play Therapy Instruction: To be completed by applicant. This section includes all play therapy instruction obtained during the date range specified. Applicants must complete the table in section A and attach copies of transcripts and training certificates issued by accredited universities and Approved Providers, respectively, to demonstrate that you earned the required number of hours during each phase.
- **Sections B and C** – Play Therapy Experience & Supervision: To be completed by applicant and verified by supervisor. See chart on page 4 for the acceptable minimum and maximum number of hours of experience and supervision accepted within each Phase.
- **Section D** – Play Therapy Competencies: To be reviewed and discussed with applicant. Applicant should meet all competencies by the completion of Phase 3.
- **Section E** – Supervisor Attestation: To be completed by supervisor. This section serves as verification for the information documented in Sections A-D. The supervisor must also verify that the required number of observations have been met during each phase and indicate their role in the relationship as either that of supervisor or consultant.

Disclaimer: The breakdown of hours in the three-phase approach was designed to serve as a guide and should not substitute the clinical judgment of the applicant or the applicant’s supervisor. Should additional hours be deemed necessary in any or all of the three criteria due to observed deficiencies in competence, APT expects that the additional hours will be obtained and documented in the credentialing application. While exceeding the minimum required hours in each criterion is encouraged, it is not mandatory, provided that applicants successfully document a minimum of 150 hours of play therapy education, 350 hours of direct play therapy experience, and 35 hours of simultaneous supervision.

Hours Earned Prior to January 1, 2020

Use **Appendix I** of the Credentialing Application to document play therapy experience and supervision hours earned prior to January 1, 2020.

Applicants must submit three **Criteria Verification forms**, one for each Phase with their application materials, documenting the requirements outlined below. Each form must be completed in its entirety and all requirements met.

Table 6.1 – Integration of Required Criteria

Phase 1		
Play Therapy Specific Instruction (Section 03)	Experience (Section 04)	Supervision (Section 05)
Hours Required: 35-55 Phase 1 only: - Seminal or Historically Significant Theories • 20-30 - Skills & Methods • 10-20 - Special Topics • 0-5 In Any Phase - History • up to 5 - Cultural & Social Diversity • up to 6 - Applicant's Choice • up to 9	At least 50 , but no more than 75 hours of Supervised Play Therapy Experience must be completed during Phase 1.	At least 5 , not more than 10 Note: Of the required 35 hours, no more than 15 group supervision hours will be accepted. Observe 1 play therapy session.
Phase 2		
Play Therapy Specific Instruction (Section 03)	Experience (Section 04)	Supervision (Section 05)
Hours Required: 55-70 Phase 2 only: - Seminal or Historically Significant Theories • 25-30 - Skills & Methods • 25-30 - Special Topics • 5-10 In Any Phase - History • up to 5 - Cultural & Social Diversity • up to 6 - Applicant's Choice • up to 9	At least 100 , but no more than 150 hours of Supervised Play Therapy Experience must be completed during Phase 2.	At least 10 , not more than 15 Note: Of the required 35 hours, no more than 15 group supervision hours will be accepted. Observe 2 play therapy sessions.
Phase 3		
Play Therapy Specific Instruction (Section 03)	Experience (Section 04)	Supervision (Section 05)
Hours Required: 45-60 Phase 3 only: - Any Theory • 10-15 - Skills & Methods • 15-20 - Special Topics • 20-25 In Any Phase - History • up to 5 - Cultural & Social Diversity • up to 6 - Applicant's Choice • up to 9	At least 100 , but no more than 175 hours of Supervised Play Therapy Experience must be completed during Phase 3.	At least 10 , not more than 20 Note: Of the required 35 hours, no more than 15 group supervision hours will be accepted. Observe 2 play therapy sessions.

Section 07 - Attestation by Applicant

As part of the credentialing application process, a comprehensive attestation is included to ensure applicants fully understand the requirements and responsibilities associated with their application. All applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully review the attestation prior to submitting their application to familiarize themselves with the terms, conditions, and obligations outlined therein.

By submitting an application to the Association for Play Therapy (APT), you acknowledge and accept full responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of all information provided. You also agree to adhere to the terms and conditions specified within the application, as well as the Credentialing Standards established by APT. Applicants further acknowledge that, in the event a credential is revoked following the completion of APT's established policies and procedures, the individual's name and credential status may be published in accordance with APT policy.

Failure to provide truthful or complete information may result in delays, denial of the application, or other action consistent with APT policies and procedures.

Section 08 - Documenting Hours Acquired Prior to 1/1/2020

In most cases, hours obtained in play therapy instruction, experience, and supervision prior to January 1, 2020 may be counted toward the credentialing requirements and documented on **Appendix I** of the Credentialing Application. Play therapy supervised experience and supervision earned after January 1, 2020 must be under the supervision of an RPT-S™ and documented on the Phase Forms.

Play Therapy Instruction

Use Section 1 of the Appendix I form to document, in date order, all play therapy instruction earned prior to January 1, 2020 received from accredited university graduate coursework or continuing education from APT Approved Providers. Attach a copy of your university graduate transcript and/or certificate of attendance to **Appendix I**.

To meet this requirement, APT accepts:

1. Graduate coursework, specific to play therapy from accredited universities when the applicant is a matriculated student at the university. If applicant is not a matriculated student, hours are counted as continuing education. See **Table 3.2**.
2. Continuing education specific to play therapy from APT Approved Providers in good standing at the time of the CE workshop. See **Table 3.2**.

For additional information on graduate coursework and play therapy continuing education training requirements, see **Section 03**.

Supervised Play Therapy Experience & Supervision

If your supervisor was an RPT-S™, please document no less than 335 hours of play therapy experience and 35 supervision hours (max 15 group supervision) on **Appendix I** of the Credentialing Application.

If your supervisor was NOT an RPT-S™, please document no less than 500 hours of play therapy experience and 50 supervision hours (max 20 group supervision) on **Appendix I** of the Credentialing Application.

Any Supervisor who provided 10 or more hours of supervision must observe at least one (1) play therapy session during supervision. Failure to meet the required observation will void the supervised experience hours.

For additional information on supervised play therapy experience and supervision requirements, see **Section 04** and **Section 05**, respectively.

Applicants are encouraged to contact APT directly with any questions.

Section 09 - Renewal of the RPT™ Credential

To maintain an active credential, please adhere to the processes outlined below. It is important to note that credentialing renewal invoices and all other communications are primarily sent via email. Please make sure your member profile is updated and/or notify APT when changes occur.

APT expects all registrants to be aware of the credentialing standards and requirements of holding a credential from the Association for Play Therapy (APT).

All Individuals that hold the Registered Play Therapist™ credential must:

1. **Renew their credential annually.** Every 12 months you will receive an RPT™ Renewal Notice at least 60 days prior to your renewal date. To maintain an active credential, a completed renewal form, signed attestation, and renewal fee must be submitted by your renewal date. APT will accept renewals up to two months early.
 - Save time and money by renewing your RPT™ credential for three years. This option is only available for current APT members, at the time their CE is due (every 36-months).
2. **License Update.** All credentialed play therapists are required to hold and maintain a current and active individual state license to independently provide clinical mental health services. It is the responsibility of all credentialed play therapists to ensure that current licensing information is updated annually (or when a state license is renewed), and that information is accurately reflected in their member profile. Non-members must submit documentation of license and all subsequent licensure renewals to info@a4pt.org.
3. **Continuing Education.** In addition to the annual requirements, all credentialed play therapists must also earn at least **24 clock hours** of postgraduate level play therapy CE every three-years. CE must be earned from accredited universities or APT Approved Providers, and must be presented by graduate-level instructors.
 - a. Of the **24** hours of play therapy CE:
 - (1) a minimum of **12 hours must be contact hours**, the additional 12 hours may be [non-contact hours](#) (which includes webinars), and
 - (2) two (2) hours must be in [cultural & social diversity](#) specific to play therapy.
 - b. Not more than **18 of the 24 hours** may be earned via one or more of these options:
 - (1) Provide play therapy specific, graduate-level instruction at an accredited university.
 - one (1) graduate credit of instruction equals three (3) clock hours of credit. **Limit nine (9) hours.**
 - (2) Provide play therapy postgraduate level continuing education sponsored by APT Approved Providers.
 - one (1) clock hour of instruction equals one (1) hour of credit. **Limit nine (9) hours.**
 - (3) Author a play therapy publication, article, or chapter.
 - 1-15 pages equal one (1) clock hour,
 - 16-50 pages equals three (3) clock hours,
 - 51-plus pages equals six (6) clock hours. **Limit 12 hours.**
 - c. Excess clock hours may not be transferred to the next 36-month CE cycle.

Audit

APT conducts audits of no more than 10% of credentialed play therapists annually. If audited by APT, you must provide copies of transcripts from accredited universities or certificates from APT Approved Providers. APT reserves the right to:

- a. request copies of course syllabi or CE certificates,
- b. review and reject the sponsor, content, and presenter of any educational or CE program,
- c. require submittal of additional information to support a renewal application,
- d. obtain information independently or from third parties, including licensing agencies/boards, in review of renewal applications.