



Music Therapy Board Certification Board Certification Domains – 2025

From the 2024 Music Therapy Practice Analysis Study, Effective October 27, 2025

Domain I: Safety (6 exam items)

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 1A Emergency response and crisis intervention techniques (e.g., cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR], first aid, de-escalation techniques)
- 1B Identification of potential for harm within treatment (e.g., physical, psychological, interpersonal, spiritual, environmental)
- 1C Client-specific safety considerations (e.g., clinical disposition, diagnosis, active symptoms, trauma, medication use, physical and mental well-being)
- 1D Roles and responsibilities of other professionals for client safety (e.g., safety officer, infection control personnel)
- 1E Verbal, physical, and music interventions for client safety
- 1F Sanitation precautions, applications, and disposal methods for reusable and non-reusable goods (e.g., personal protective equipment [PPE], instrument materials)
- 1G Safe physical management practices and compliance principles (e.g., handling medical equipment, transportation, physical support and assistance)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

- 1. Recognize and respond to situations in which there are clear and present physical dangers to a client and/or others and comply with emergency procedures
- 2. Recognize the potential harm and contraindications of music experiences for clients and adapt treatment as necessary
- 3. Recognize the potential harm and contraindication of verbal and physical interventions for clients and adapt treatment as necessary
- 4. Observe infection control protocols (e.g., universal precautions, instrument disinfection)
- 5. Apply organizational safety compliance training principles and policies
- 6. Comply with relevant safety protocols when providing physical support to clients
- 7. Facilitate appropriate and safe use of all materials, equipment, and instruments based on the physical environment

Domain II: Referral, Assessment, Interpretation of Assessment, and Treatment Planning (39 exam items)

2A. Referral

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 2A-1 Referral system processes and criteria for determining eligibility
- 2A-2 Communication of the referral system processes and criteria with other professionals

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

8. Develop, implement, and/or utilize appropriate referral system for the setting
9. Educate staff, the treatment team, and/or other stakeholders regarding appropriate referral criteria for music therapy based on the setting and individual needs
10. Evaluate and prioritize the appropriateness of a referral for music therapy services

2B. Assessment

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 2B-1 Proper interpretation and use of client records (e.g., symptomology, clinical insight, confidentiality)
- 2B-2 Client assessment techniques (e.g., interview, observation)
- 2B-3 Assessment processes, criteria, and protocols
- 2B-4 Assessment practices and communication approaches (e.g., active listening, cultural humility, empathy, validation of personhood and humanness)
- 2B-5 Client responses to musical elements and non-musical treatment experiences (e.g., physical, behavioral, social)
- 2B-6 Needs assessment within multiple domains of health and well-being (e.g., psychosocial, physiological, spiritual, musical)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

11. Obtain initial assessment data through systematic client observation, interviews, and responsible access to client information (e.g., medical records, Individual Education Plan [IEP]) as available
12. Engage clients in musical and non-musical experiences to identify clients' needs, abilities, strengths, skills, and resources within multiple domains of health and well-being (e.g., psychosocial, physiological, spiritual, musical)
13. Identify and implement potential modifications and adaptations throughout the assessment process to support accessibility
14. Engage clients in musical and non-musical experiences to identify the impact of ecological factors on clients' health and well-being (e.g., trauma, medication use, community involvement)
15. Respect all aspects of self-reported and expressed personhood and humanness (e.g., racial and ethnic identity, cultural values, spiritual/religious beliefs) when conducting an assessment
16. Develop and adapt assessment tools and procedures based on clients' needs and/or setting requirements
17. Create an assessment environment or space conducive to the assessment protocol and/or a client's needs
18. Identify clients' responses to different elements and styles of music (e.g., melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, form)
19. Identify clients' responses to different types of musical and non-musical experiences (e.g., improvising, recreating, composing, listening, moving)

2C. Interpret Assessment Information and Communicate Results

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 2C-1 Assessment data analysis and interpretation
- 2C-2 Recognition of internal and external factors that impact assessment data interpretation (e.g., conflicts of interest, pre-existing conditions, bias)
- 2C-3 Goal identification derived from the assessment
- 2C-4 Communication of assessment recommendations with the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals
- 2C-5 Clinical terminology

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

- 20. Identify biases and limitations when interpreting assessment information
- 21. Identify factors that may impact the accuracy of information gathered during an assessment (e.g., dominant language, precipitating events, medication use, health considerations)
- 22. Analyze and interpret assessment findings and communicate recommendations in various formats (e.g., written, oral, audio, video)

2D. Treatment Planning

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 2D-1 Collaboration with the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals for treatment planning (e.g., goals, treatment preferences)
- 2D-2 Individualized treatment planning using evidence-based practices (e.g., professional expertise, research evidence, client preferences)
- 2D-3 Service delivery model and schedule (e.g., imminent needs, length of service, travel distance, tele-health)
- 2D-4 Identification of treatment progress and outcomes (e.g., short-term measurable objectives, long-term goals)
- 2D-5 Cultural responsiveness and humility in treatment planning
- 2D-6 Properties of musical instruments (e.g., acoustics, materials, sizes)
- 2D-7 Goal-directed music and non-music experience/intervention design
- 2D-8 Accessibility adaptations to treatment (e.g., music selection, instruments, equipment, positioning, communication devices, technology)
- 2D-9 External factors that may impact treatment planning (e.g., trauma, medication use, community involvement)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

23. Use evidence-based practice in the treatment planning process (e.g., professional expertise, research evidence, client preferences)
24. Adjust the treatment plan based on the possible effects of medications
25. Collaborate with the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals to design the treatment plan
26. Evaluate the role of music therapy, considering the frequency, intensity, duration, and service delivery model, when developing a treatment plan
27. Establish client goals and objectives within domains of health/wellness and determine an appropriate system for tracking client progress, outcomes, and exit criteria as needed
28. Respect all aspects of self-reported and expressed personhood and humanness (e.g., racial and ethnic identity, cultural values, spiritual/religious beliefs) when treatment planning
29. Design experiences to facilitate generalization or transferability of skills across clinical/non-clinical contexts when appropriate
30. Select appropriate equipment, physical/virtual space, musical elements, repertoire, and instruments consistent with the treatment plan

Domain III: Treatment Implementation and Documentation (60 exam items)

3A. Implementation

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 3A-1 Therapeutic pacing, sequencing, transitions, and intensity
- 3A-2 Task analysis and goal-directed session planning (e.g., time management, instrument selection)
- 3A-3 Treatment modification within and across sessions based on the client's response and growth (e.g., alternate applications of music, appropriate music selection, adaptation of the physical/virtual session space)
- 3A-4 Collaboration with other professionals to promote accessibility and support client progress (e.g., therapist, social worker, educator)
- 3A-5 Transference and counter-transference in treatment
- 3A-6 Theoretical frameworks for music therapy treatment implementation (e.g., educational, developmental, neurological, psychological)
- 3A-7 Music therapy methods used to support therapeutic outcomes (e.g., improvising, recreating, composing, listening, moving)
- 3A-8 Music theory (e.g., composition, harmony, transposition)
- 3A-9 Instrument and voice proficiency
- 3A-10 Clinical adaptation of musicianship to address therapeutic needs
- 3A-11 Effects of music elements and music experience (e.g., psychological, emotional, physical)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

31. Structure and organize music therapy experiences within each session to create therapeutic contour (e.g., transitions, pacing, sequencing, energy level, intensity)
32. Identify and implement potential modifications and adaptations throughout the treatment process to support accessibility
33. Utilize evidence-based techniques, including presence, authenticity, and respect, to establish and maintain trust and rapport with the client
34. Recognize one's own professional and personal biases, feelings, and behaviors that affect the therapeutic process (e.g., transference and counter-transference) to maintain boundaries within the therapeutic relationship
35. Respect all aspects of self-reported and expressed personhood and humanness (e.g., racial and ethnic identity, cultural values, spiritual/religious beliefs) during treatment implementation
36. Engage the client in individualized music therapy experiences to address the client's established goals and objectives within multiple domains of health and well-being (e.g., psychosocial, physiological, spiritual, musical)
37. Articulate the theoretical basis for practice in written and verbal forms
38. Apply theoretical frameworks and principles within music therapy clinical decision-making processes to address established client goals and objectives
39. Apply clinical musicianship to address established client goals and objectives

3B. Documentation

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 3B-1 Documentation processes and tools
- 3B-2 Methods of clinical observation and data collection to document the client's progress or outcomes
- 3B-3 Documentation of information and evidence-based outcomes across all aspects of the treatment process (e.g., referral, assessment, treatment plan, treatment implementation, termination)
- 3B-4 Secure storage and transfer of clinical documentation
- 3B-5 Legal, regulatory, and agency requirements associated with documentation (e.g., Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA], confidentiality, record of client, reimbursement)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

40. Report the client's progress by recording client responses and outcomes in a secure manner using language that is appropriate for the client and setting
41. Complete required documentation throughout treatment process (e.g., referral, assessment, treatment plan, treatment implementation, termination) that complies with legal, regulatory, and reimbursement requirements in a secure manner

Domain IV: Evaluation and Termination of Treatment (13 exam items)

4A. Evaluation

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 4A-1 Data analysis methods and tools used for evaluation
- 4A-2 Interpretation of empirical data (e.g., baseline data comparison, observed progress toward goals, bias)
- 4A-3 Consultation with the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals regarding treatment evaluation
- 4A-4 Treatment review cycles and outcomes
- 4A-5 Contraindications for continuing treatment
- 4A-6 Evaluation of the treatment plan related to the client's determined goals
- 4A-7 Generalization and transferability of treatment experiences across non-clinical contexts

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

- 42. Draw upon evidence-based practice principles to develop an informed and comprehensive evaluation of client progress to date
- 43. Recognize personal bias and limitations when interpreting information (e.g., cultural differences, clinical orientation)
- 44. Regularly review treatment plans by analyzing progress and outcome data to determine the effectiveness of therapy and modify as needed
- 45. Communicate progress to the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals and make recommendations and referrals as needed
- 46. Collaborate with the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals to design the treatment plan

4B. Termination of Treatment

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 4B-1 Benefits and risks of treatment termination
- 4B-2 Termination planning (e.g., staffing changes, patient discharge, goal achievement, music-based resources)
- 4B-3 Tools used to inform termination status (e.g., documentation, data analysis)
- 4B-4 Communication of the termination plan with the client and/or family/care partner and other professionals

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

- 47. Develop a termination plan involving the client and others (e.g., family, care partners) after assessing potential benefits and risks
- 48. Initiate the termination of music therapy services considering the client's goal accomplishment, stalled progress, contraindications, and increased potential for harm
- 49. Address client needs during the termination process to work through feelings and provide transitional support and recommendations

Domain V: Professional Development and Responsibilities (12 exam items)

5A. Professional Development

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 5A-1 Resources for continuing education (e.g., lessons, self-study, approved continuing education courses for music therapy)
- 5A-2 Self-assessment and identification of personal/professional skill development needs (e.g., musicianship, leadership, therapeutic effectiveness)
- 5A-3 Technological and media advancements in the profession
- 5A-4 Evidence-based research and current professional practices in music therapy
- 5A-5 Resources for professional growth (e.g., mentoring, clinical supervision)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

- 50. Conduct self-assessments and participate in continuing education to address areas of professional growth and prioritize courses of action
- 51. Develop and expand musicianship, therapeutic effectiveness, leadership skills, and music trend awareness
- 52. Develop and advance technology and interactive media skills in practice
- 53. Maintain familiarity with the current research and literature in music therapy and related disciplines
- 54. Seek and receive clinical and peer supervision to encourage professional growth
- 55. Seek and provide mentorship as appropriate

5B. Professional Responsibilities

Knowledge Statements: The knowledge needed to fulfill job responsibilities

- 5B-1 Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) Code of Professional Practice
- 5B-2 Professional and ethical responsibilities
- 5B-3 Principles of social justice and client advocacy (e.g., cultural sensitivity, personhood, dignity)
- 5B-4 Federal laws, regulations, and guidelines pertaining to practice (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS], Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA], Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA], Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA], mandated reporting)
- 5B-5 Client rights (e.g., confidentiality, safety, agency, release of information)
- 5B-6 Organizational guidelines, protocols, and standards (e.g., incident reporting)
- 5B-7 Professional guidelines and regulatory standards (e.g., Certification Board for Music Therapists [CBMT] governance, American Music Therapy Association [AMTA] governance)
- 5B-8 Personal resources that support mental and physical health (e.g., Employee Assistance Program [EAP], therapy)
- 5B-9 Advocacy for the music therapy profession
- 5B-10 Operational responsibilities (e.g., budgeting, scheduling, reimbursements, resource maintenance)
- 5B-11 Clinician scope of practice within education, training, and abilities
- 5B-12 Roles and responsibilities of other professionals for supporting clients
- 5B-13 Bias identification and management in therapeutic settings
- 5B-14 Therapist-client relationship in the therapeutic process (e.g., ethical considerations, professional boundaries)

Task Statements: The underlying responsibilities of the music therapist within this domain area

56. Adhere to the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) Code of Professional Practice
57. Conduct oneself in an authentic, ethical, accountable, and culturally sensitive manner that respects privacy, dignity, boundaries, and human rights in all settings, including clinical practice, social media, and marketing
58. Maintain knowledge of federal and state laws, rules, and regulations that may affect practice
59. Work within an organization's structures, policies, and standards
60. Practice within professional scope of competence based on education, training, and abilities
61. Fulfill legal responsibilities associated with the professional role (e.g., mandated reporting, release of information)
62. Maintain clients' protected health information as required by law (e.g., Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA], Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA])
63. Maintain professional and effective working relationships with colleagues and community members
64. Stay apprised of current issues and trends in music therapy governance, ethics, scope of practice, certification, and licensure
65. Evaluate personal and professional assumptions, values, biases, and limitations related to practice
66. Monitor own mental and physical health and seek support as needed to ensure professional effectiveness and competence
67. Serve as a representative, spokesperson, ambassador, or advocate for the profession of music therapy
68. Manage administrative and/or business tasks related to professional practice as needed (e.g., budgets, schedules, reimbursements, resource maintenance)
69. Develop readiness to provide competent supervision to music therapy students and interns

This document, CBMT Music Therapy Board Certification Domains - 2025, was developed from the results of the 2024 Music Therapy Practice Analysis Study. CBMT Board Certification Domains defines the body of knowledge that represents competent practice in the profession of music therapy and identifies what a board-certified music therapist, a credentialed MT-BC, may do in practice. Continuing Music Therapy Education credits must relate to an area identified in the CBMT Board Certification Domains. This document will be utilized as the source of reference for exam content, certification, and recertification requirements beginning on October 27, 2025.

cbmt.org

506 E. Lancaster Ave. Suite 102
Downingtown, PA 19335
1.800.765.CBMT (2268)
info@cbmt.org