

Rafel A. Sgammato, Neurologic Music Therapist,

was guest speaker at the Commission on Aging, April 11, 2017.

She has a Bachelor's degree and certification in music therapy.

She specializes in helping older adults who have cognition problems.

Key points of her presentation:

- Musical therapy is the clinical use of music to promote wellness, manage stress and depression, alleviate pain, enhance memory and communication. It is effective in helping people with emotional and psychological disabilities, and some physical conditions such as Parkinson's disease. Therapists use instrumental and vocal music , including improvising, composing, accompanying individuals or groups, and giving instrumental instruction.
- Connecticut requires music therapists (unlike musical entertainers) to be licensed and certified. Therapists must have a Bachelor's degree in music, and must pass rigorous testing to prove proficiency. Therapists must follow a strict code of ethics for the protection of their clients.
- Therapists will work with physicians and other health professionals to get referrals and assessments, and to determine suitability of music therapy for individual clients. Therapists can work in hospitals and other health care facilities, senior centers, adult day care centers, retirement facilities, or in clients' homes. Ms. Sgammato encourages clients to participate, emphasizing that participation yields more benefits and better results than just listening. Participation includes the use of rattles, bells and other simple, easy-to-use instruments, and adaptive equipment for people with physical disabilities.
- Studies, and Ms. Sgammato's experience, have shown that music therapy is particularly effective in helping people with depression and cognitive disability. In some cases results were seen as soon as the day after therapy.
- Ms. Sgammato ended her presentation with a demonstration on the guitar, showing how different tempos work better for different types of problems and disabilities.