

**DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA  
MUNICIPAL  
REGULATIONS  
for  
MASSAGE  
THERAPY**

## **CHAPTER 75      MASSAGE THERAPY**

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### **7500      GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- 7500.1      This chapter shall apply to applicants for and holders of a license to practice massage therapy.
- 7500.2      Chapters 40 (Health Occupations: General Rules) and 41 (Health Occupations: Administrative Procedures) of this title shall supplement this chapter.

### **7501      TERM OF LICENSE**

- 7501.1      Subject to §7501.2, a license issued pursuant to this chapter shall expire at 12:00 midnight of January 31 of each odd-numbered year.
- 7501.2      If the Director changes the renewal system pursuant to §4006.3 of Chapter 40 of this title, a license issued pursuant to this chapter shall expire at 12:00 midnight of the last day of the month of the birth date of the holder of the license, or other date established by the Director.

### **7502      EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

- 7502.1      Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, an applicant shall furnish proof satisfactory to the Board that the applicant has successfully completed an

educational program in the practice of massage therapy at an institution or institutions licensed by the District of Columbia Educational Licensing Commission or, in the discretion of the Board, by the educational licensing authority of another state, at the time the applicant graduated. In addition, said institution(s) shall be approved or accredited by the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation/Approval or shall have equivalent standards as determined by the Board; or said institution(s) shall be accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Education and Training, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology, another accreditation agency approved by the United States Department of Education, or a regional body for post secondary education, at the time the applicant graduated, in accordance with § 504(d-1) of the Act (D.C. Official Code § 3-1205.04(d-1)).

- 7502.2 An applicant for a license to practice massage therapy shall establish, to the satisfaction of the Board, that he or she has successfully completed a minimum of five hundred (500) hours of in-class training. At least three (3) of the hours' shall be in professional ethics.
- 7502.3 An applicant who applies for a license to practice as a massage therapist more than two (2) years after completing the educational and examination requirements shall submit proof, to the satisfaction of the Board, of having completed fifty (50) hours of clinical training under the charge of a supervisor, of which at least twenty-five (25) hours shall be client contact hours within the four (4) months prior to the date the application is submitted.
- 7502.4 Of the minimum 500 hours of in-class training required by § 7502.2, a minimum of 100 hours shall consist of anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology. The remaining 400 hours shall include a majority of hours in massage therapy theory and practice, as well as discretionary related course work, including but not limited to professional ethics, business practices, health and hygiene, contraindications of massage, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and first aid.
- 7502.5 The in-class training hours required by § 7502.2 shall be accumulated in programs not less than six (6) months total duration.
- 7502.6 An applicant may attend more than one (1) training institution, provided he or she graduates from a school requiring a minimum of five hundred (500) in-class hours.
- 7502.7 Credits earned from a college or university shall be converted by the federal government conversion rate, which grants thirty-seven (37) clock hours for each one (1) credit hour. One (1) classroom hour shall be defined as no less than fifty (50) minutes of any one (1) clock hour. The Board shall not recognize correspondence and on-line courses.
- 7502.8 An applicant shall submit the following as part of a completed application form:

- (a) An official certified transcript of the applicant's successful completion of the required in-class training;
- (b) A certificate of graduation from an approved school;
- (c) Certification, pursuant to § 7504.2, of the applicant's passing the required approved examination; and
- (d) Current certification in both CPR and first aid.

7502.9 The Board may issue a list of approved schools and training programs.

### **7503 APPLICANTS EDUCATED IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES**

7503.1 The Board may grant a license to practice massage therapy to an applicant who completed an educational program in a foreign country if the applicant meets the following requirements:

- (a) Meets all requirements of this chapter except for §7502.1; and
- (b) Demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Board that the applicant's education and training are substantially equivalent to the requirements of this subtitle and the Act in ensuring that the applicant is qualified to practice massage therapy by arranging for an evaluation of the applicant's education and practical training.

7503.2 To qualify for a license under this section, an applicant shall have successfully completed a training program that meets the standards for accreditation of massage therapy programs equivalent to those set forth in §7502.1.

7503.3 The Board may interview an applicant under this section to determine whether the applicant's education and/or training meets the requirements of the Act and this chapter.

7503.4 If a document required by this subtitle is in a language other than English, an applicant shall arrange for its translation into English by a translation service acceptable to the Board and shall submit a translation signed by the translator attesting to its accuracy.

### **7504 NATIONAL EXAMINATION**

7504.1 To qualify for a license by examination, an applicant shall receive a passing score on the National Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCETMB) or another examination which is certified by the National

Commission of Certifying Agencies (NCCA) or the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) and approved at the discretion of the Board.

7504.2 An applicant shall submit, with a completed application to the Board, the applicant's examination results, certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) or another testing service approved by the Board pursuant to §7504.1.

7504.3 The Board shall only consider an application after the applicant has passed the required approved examination.

**7505 [RESERVED]**

**7506 CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

7506.1 Subject to § 7506.2, this section shall apply to applicants for the renewal, reactivation, or reinstatement of a license and shall not apply to applicants for an initial licensure or the first renewal of a license

7506.2 A continuing education credit shall be valid only if it is part of a program or activity approved by the Board in accordance with § 7507.

7506.3 To qualify for the renewal of a license, an applicant shall have completed the following continuing education during the two (2)-year period preceding the date the license expires:

- (a) An applicant seeking to renew a license expiring on or before January 31, 2019 shall have completed twelve (12) hours of approved continuing education, which shall include three (3) hours of professional ethics and nine (9) hours of massage-related course work, six (6) of which shall be hands-on, massage technique course(s) completed in a live classroom setting; or
- (b) An applicant seeking to renew a license expiring on or after January 31, 2021 shall have completed fourteen (14) hours of approved continuing education, which shall include three (3) hours of professional ethics, nine (9) hours of massage-related course work, six (6) of which shall be hands-on, massage technique course(s) completed in a live classroom setting, and two (2) hours of LGBTQ continuing education; and
- (c) An applicant seeking to renew a license at any time shall have completed ten percent (10%) of the total required continuing education in the subjects determined by the Director as public health priorities of the District, which shall be duly published every five (5) years or as deemed appropriate.

- 7506.4 To qualify for the reactivation of a license, an applicant whose license has been in inactive status in accordance with section 511 of the Act, D.C. Official Code § 3-1205.11, and who does not possess a current and valid license to practice massage therapy in another jurisdiction in the United States shall have completed, during the two (2) years before the date of the application, fourteen (14) hours of approved continuing education, which shall include three (3) hours of professional ethics, nine (9) hours of massage-related course work, six (6) of which shall be hands-on, massage technique course(s) completed in a live classroom setting, and two (2) hours of LGBTQ continuing education, provided further that ten percent (10) of the total required continuing education in the subjects determined by the Director as public health priorities of the District, which shall be duly published every five (5) years or as deemed appropriate.
- 7506.5 To qualify for the reactivation of a license, an applicant whose license has been in inactive status in accordance with section 511 of the Act, D.C. Official Code § 3-1205.11, and who possesses a current and valid license or authorization to practice massage therapy in another jurisdiction of the United States shall be deemed to possess current competency and shall not be required to submit proof of continuing education.
- 7506.6 A licensee may obtain and remain in inactive status in accordance with D.C. Official Code § 3-1205.11 for no more than ten (10) years. A person whose license has been inactive for more than ten (10) years shall apply for and meet the requirements for licensure in accordance with § 7502.
- 7506.7 To qualify for reinstatement of a license, an applicant shall have completed the following continuing education:
- (a) An applicant whose license has expired two (2) years or less shall have completed fourteen (14) hours of continuing education as enumerated in § 7506.3(b) during the two (2) years' period preceding the date of the application; or
  - (b) An applicant whose license has expired more than two (2) years but less than five (5) years shall have completed twenty-six (26) hours of the following continuing education during the two (2) years' period preceding the date of the application:
    - (1) Six (6) hours of professional ethics;
    - (2) Eighteen (18) hours of massage-related course work provided by a Board approved provider of which twelve (12) hours shall be hands-on, massage-technique course(s) completed in a live classroom setting taught by appropriate instructors; and

(3) Two (2) hours of LGBTQ continuing education; and

- (c) An applicant seeking to reinstate a license under this subsection shall have completed ten percent (10%) of the total required continuing education in the subjects determined by the Director as public health priorities of the District, which shall be duly published every five (5) years or as deemed appropriate.

7506.8 An applicant under this section shall prove completion of required continuing education credits by submitting the following information with respect to each program:

- (a) The name and address of the sponsor of the program;
- (b) The name of the program, its location, a description of the subject matter covered, and the names of the instructors;
- (c) The dates on which the applicant attended the program;
- (d) The hours of credit claimed; and
- (e) Verification by the sponsor of completion, by signature or stamp.

7506.9 The Board may periodically conduct a random audit of its active licensees to determine continuing education compliance. Any licensee selected for the audit shall submit proof of his or her continuing education to the Board within thirty (30) days of receiving notification of the audit. Failure to timely respond to the audit notice may subject the licensee to disciplinary action by the Board.

## **7507 APPROVED CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

7507.1 The Board may, in its discretion, approve continuing education programs and activities that contribute to the growth of an applicant in professional competence in the practice of massage therapy and which meet the other requirements of this section.

7507.2 The Board may approve the following types of continuing education programs if the program meets the requirements of § 7507.3:

- (a) An undergraduate or graduate course given at an accredited college or university;
- (b) A seminar or workshop;

- (c) An educational program given at a conference; and
- (d) In-service training.

7507.3 To qualify for approval by the Board, a continuing education program shall do the following:

- (a) Be current in its subject matter;
- (b) Be developed and taught by qualified individuals; and
- (c) Meet one (1) of the following requirements:
  - (1) Be administered or approved by a recognized national, state, or local massage therapy organization, NCBTMB, health care organization, accredited health care facility, or an accredited college or university; or
  - (2) Be submitted by the program sponsors to the Board for review no less than sixty (60) days prior to the date of the presentation and be approved by the Board.

7507.4 The Board may issue and update a list of approved continuing education programs.

7507.5 An applicant shall have the burden of verifying whether a program is approved by the Board pursuant to this section prior to attending the program.

7507.6 The Board may approve the following continuing education activities by an applicant:

- (a) Serving as an instructor or speaker at a conference, seminar, workshop, or in-service training;
- (b) Publication of an article in a professional journal or publication of a book or a chapter in a book or publication of a book review in a professional journal or bulletin related to massage therapy;
- (c) Serving as a clinical instructor for students of massage therapy; or
- (d) Participating in research as a principal investigator or research assistant.

## **7508 CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS**

7508.1 The Board may grant continuing education credit for whole hours only, with a minimum of fifty (50) minutes constituting one (1) credit hour.



- 7508.2 For approved undergraduate or graduate courses that are taken for educational credit, each semester credit constitutes thirty-seven (37) hours of continuing education credit, and each quarter credit constitutes thirty (30) hours of continuing education credit.
- 7508.3 For approved undergraduate or graduate courses that are audited, two (2) hours of continuing education credit shall be granted.
- 7508.4 The Board may grant a maximum of six (6) continuing education credits per year to an applicant who attends in-service education programs.
- 7508.5 The Board may grant to an applicant who serves as an instructor or speaker at an acceptable program for both preparation and presentation time, subject to the restrictions in §7508.6 through § 7508.8.
- 7508.6 The maximum amount of credit that may be granted for preparation time is twice the amount of the associated presentation time.
- 7508.7 If an applicant has previously received credit in connection with a particular presentation, the Board shall not grant credit for a subsequent presentation unless it involves either a different subject or substantial additional research concerning the same subject.
- 7508.8 The presentation shall have been completed during the period for which credit is claimed.
- 7508.9 The Board may grant an applicant who is an author or sole editor of a published book eight (8) hours of continuing education credit, if the book has been published or accepted for publication during the period for which credit is claimed and the applicant submits proof of this fact in the application.
- 7508.10 The Board may grant an applicant who is the sole author or co-author of a published original paper four (4) hours of continuing education credit, subject to the same restrictions set forth for books in § 7508.9.
- 7508.11 The Board may grant an applicant who is the sole author of a published book review, review paper, or abstract, two (2) hours of continuing education credit, subject to the same restrictions set forth for books in § 7508.9.

**7509 [REPEALED]**

**7510 SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

7510.1 A massage therapist or any person so authorized under the Act to perform massage therapy may perform therapeutic maneuvers in which the practitioner applies massage techniques, including use of the hand or limb, by applying touch and pressure to the human body. Such techniques include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) Stroking,(including but not limited to Effluerage);
- (b) Kneading, (including but not limited to Petrissage);
- (c) Tapping, (including but not limited to Tapotement);
- (d) Flexibility training, (including but not limited to stretching, strengthening, and manual traction);
- (e) Compression;
- (f) Vibration;
- (g) Friction;
- (h) Application of heat, cold, and water;
- (i) Non-prescription drug applications, (including mild abrasives) for the purpose of improving circulation, enhancing muscle relaxation, relieving muscle pain, reducing stress, or promotion health; or
- (j) Holding, positioning, or causing movement of an individual's body.

7510.2 Massage therapy does not include incidental use of soft tissue manipulation while primarily engaging in another technique or modality in which a practitioner is qualified.

## **7511 PRACTICE OF MASSAGE THERAPY BY STUDENTS OR APPLICANTS**

7511.1 This section shall apply to the following:

- (a) Students enrolled in schools or colleges recognized by the Board pursuant to § 7502.1 as candidates for a certificate or degree in massage therapy; and
- (b) Applicants for a license whose first application for a license in the District of Columbia is pending.

7511.2 A student or applicant may perform actions which require a license as a massage therapist only in accordance with the Act and this section.

- 7511.3 Students and applicants shall adhere to the following:
- (a) A student shall practice massage therapy only under the charge of a supervisor; and
  - (b) An applicant may practice massage therapy prior to licensure for 90 days under the charge of a supervisor.
- 7511.4 The practice of massage therapy by a student or applicant must be subject to the written consent and protocols of the supervisor or school.
- 7511.5 A student or applicant shall identify himself or herself as a student or applicant at all times when performing actions of a massage therapist.
- 7511.6 A massage therapist supervising a student or an applicant shall be fully responsible for massage therapy performed according to the written protocols of the school or supervisor by the student or applicant during the time of the supervision and is subject to disciplinary action for any violation of the Act or this chapter by the person supervised.
- 7511.7 A student may not be paid or receive compensation of any nature, directly or indirectly, from a client.
- 7511.8 Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to bar a school from charging fees for its students' massage therapy services to the public.
- 7511.9 A student or applicant shall be subject to all of the applicable provisions of the Act and this chapter.
- 7511.10 In accordance with Chapter 41 of this title, the Board may deny an application for a license by, or take other disciplinary action against a student or applicant who is found to have violated the Act or this chapter.
- 7511.11 If the Board finds that a student or applicant has violated the Act or this chapter, the Board may, in addition to any other disciplinary actions permitted by the Act, revoke, suspend, or restrict the privilege of the student or applicant to practice.

## **7512 CARDIAC PULMONARY RESUSCITATION AND FIRST AID REQUIREMENTS**

- 7512.1 This section shall apply to renewal, reactivation, or reinstatement of a license for a term beginning February 1, 2009, and for subsequent terms thereafter.

7512.2 An applicant for renewal, reactivation, or reinstatement of a license shall submit to the Board with the renewal, reactivation, or reinstatement application copies of certificates indicating CPR and first-aid certification valid at the date of renewal, reactivation, or reinstatement. Such certification shall not be used to satisfy continuing education requirements.

7512.3 A person licensed under this chapter shall maintain, without interruption or gap, valid and effective CPR and first-aid certifications for the duration of his or her massage therapy license issued under this chapter.

7512.4 A certification of the CPR training as required in this section shall be valid only if the training was completed in a live classroom setting taught by an appropriate instructor.

### **7513 ADVERTISEMENT**

7513.1 A massage therapist licensed under the provisions of this chapter shall include the number of his or her license in any advertisement of massage services appearing in any newspaper, airwave transmission, telephone directory or other advertising medium.

### **7514 STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

7514.1 A licensed massage therapist shall do the following:

- (a) Perform only those services for which the massage therapist is qualified and shall not represent his or her skills, training, scope of practice, certifications, professional affiliations, and other qualifications in a manner which is false or misleading;
- (b) Work to eliminate prejudices in the profession and not unjustly discriminate against clients or colleagues;
- (c) Abide by all health occupations laws that apply to the practice of massage therapy;
- (d) Protect the client's right to privacy by not divulging confidential information unless disclosure is with the consent of the client or the client's guardian, or is, in the judgment of the massage therapist, needed to protect the client or the community, or is otherwise required by law;
- (e) Conduct business and professional activities with honesty and integrity and project a professional image in all aspects of his or her practice;

- (f) Respect the integrity of each person and, therefore, shall not engage in any sexual activity with clients or individuals who have been clients within the previous twelve (12) months, nor engage in any activities with the intent of sexually arousing clients;
- (g) Provide information about fees upon request by the client;
- (h) Promptly report any information of illegal, unethical, or unsafe practice of massage therapy to the Board;
- (i) Use professional verbal, nonverbal, and written communications;
- (j) Provide an environment that is safe and comfortable for the client and which, at a minimum, meets all legal requirements for health and safety;
- (k) Use standard precautions to insure professional hygienic practices and maintain a level of personal hygiene appropriate for practitioners in the therapeutic setting;
- (l) Wear clothing that is clean, modest, and professional;
- (m) Obtain voluntary and informed consent from the client or the client's guardian prior to initiating the session;
- (n) If applicable, conduct an accurate needs assessment, develop a plan of care with the client, and update the plan as needed;
- (o) Use appropriate draping to protect the client's physical and emotional privacy;
- (p) Refer to other professionals when in the best interest of the client or practitioner;
- (q) Seek other professional advice when needed;
- (r) Respect the traditions and practices of other professionals and foster collegial relationships;
- (s) Refrain from impugning the reputation of any colleague;
- (t) Protect the interests of clients who are minors or who are unable to give voluntary consent by securing permission from an appropriate third-party or guardian;
- (u) Solicit only information that is relevant to the professional client therapist relationship;

- (v) Maintain client files for a minimum of three (3) years past the date of last contact for an adult and, for a minor, a minimum of three (3) years after the minor reaches the age of majority;
- (w) Store and dispose of client files in a secure manner;
- (x) Maintain adequate and customary liability insurance;
- (y) Advertise in a manner that is not misleading to the public by, among other things, the use of sensational, sexual, or provocative language or pictures to promote business;
- (z) Display or discuss schedule of fees in advance of the session so as to be clearly understood by the client or potential client;
- (aa) Recognize his or her influential position with the client and not exploit the relationship for personal or other gain;
- (bb) Respect the client's right to refuse the therapeutic session;
- (cc) Refrain from practicing under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substances, with the exception of prescribed dosages of prescription medication that do not significantly impair the therapist; and
- (dd) Have the right to refuse or terminate the service provided to a client who is abusive or under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substance.

## **7515 SUPERVISED PRACTICE FORM**

7515.1 A supervised practice form shall be submitted two (2) weeks prior to commencement of supervised practice. A supervised practice form may only be issued to an applicant one (1) time. An applicant may practice massage therapy while working under a supervised practice form for no more than ninety (90) days, and may practice at multiple locations at the discretion of the supervisor(s).

7515.2 A supervisor may supervise no more than three (3) applicants at any one time.

## **7516 [REPEALED]**

## **7599 DEFINITIONS**

7599.1 As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings ascribed:

**Act** - means the D.C. Health Occupations Revision Act of 1985, effective March 15, 1986 (D.C. Law 6-99; D.C Official Code § 3-1201.01 et seq.).

**Applicant** - means a person applying for a license to practice massage therapy under this chapter.

**Approved School** - means any institution or training program which meets the requirements of § 7502.1.

**Board** - means the Board of Massage Therapy, established by § 215(a) of the Act (D.C. Official Code § 3-1203.15(a)).

**Director** – The Director of the Department of Health, or the Director’s designee.

**Hands-on, massage-technique course** – means a course, class, workshop, or training session in which one or more massage techniques are taught or provide the basis of the instruction, and the participants or attendees have the opportunity to emulate, practice, or learn massage techniques from the instructor.

**Incidental use** - means soft tissue manipulation performed as part of movement reeducation, energy healing, or other modality in which the soft tissue manipulation is not the central aim of the treatment, but is performed occasionally to facilitate the non-massage therapy practice.

**LGBTQ continuing education** – continuing education focusing on patients or clients who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender nonconforming, queer, or question their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression (“LGBTQ”) meeting the requirements of § 510(b)(5) of the Act (D.C. Official Code § 3-1205.10(b)(5) (2016 Repl.)).

**Massage techniques** - means any touching or pressure with the intent of providing healing or therapeutic benefits through soft tissue manipulation. Massage techniques include, but are not limited to, Rolfing, Neuromuscular Therapy, Shiatsu or acupressure, Trigger Point massage, Trager, Tui na, Reflexology, Thai Massage, deep tissue massage, Myofascial Release, Lymphatic Drainage, Craniosacral, Polarity, Reiki, Swedish Massage, and Therapeutic Touch. Massage techniques may be performed in any postural position including seated massage and techniques performed on clothed clients.

**Massage therapist** - means a person licensed to practice massage therapy under the Act.

**Sexual activity** - means any direct or indirect physical contact or connection by any person, or between persons, which is intended to erotically stimulate either or both persons or which is likely to cause such stimulation. As used herein, sexual activity can involve the use of any device or object and is not dependent on whether penetration, orgasm, or ejaculation occurs.

**Supervision** - means oversight by a supervisor who is available on the premises or by vocal communication, either directly or by a communications device, and within one (1) hour of travel time of the supervisee.

**Supervisor** - means a massage therapist who is licensed under the Act and in good standing in the District of Columbia, who assumes legal, ethical, and professional responsibility for the conduct of a student or applicant performing massage therapy under his or her charge.

**Therapeutic** - means having a positive affect on the health and well-being of the client.

**Training** - means in-class instruction from an approved institution pursuant to § 7502.1. Apprenticeships, internships, correspondence courses or any other out-of-class experience are not considered training, but are considered experience.

7599.2 The definitions of §4099 of Chapter 40 of this title are incorporated by reference into and are applicable to this title.