



Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

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Dear California Member:

While many of you by now regularly catch up on regulatory developments by visiting www.abmp.com, the news of SB 731 completing its legislative journey and being signed into law on August 30 merits this letter communication to all 12,268 ABMP California members. The new law provides for voluntary statewide certification. For some ABMP members not currently challenged by local restrictions, SB 731 won't much matter. For thousands of others, it holds the promise of finally having a path out of onerous and expensive local regulatory thickets.

The following material addresses how this somewhat complex law will affect different categories of massage therapists. Right up front it makes clear that implementation of the law is months away and that answers to some questions await the creation of the California Massage Therapy Organization. Nonetheless, we hope this preliminary guidance will help you plan and prepare for new choices SB 731 offers you.

As further clarification emerges in mid-2009, ABMP plans to send you updated guidance on how to apply for certification and how much it will cost. Thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely, Your ABMP Staff



California—What do I do now?

Just because a bill becomes law doesn't mean it is quickly implemented. First, the California Massage Therapy Organization (CMTO), which will provide oversight of the certification process, needs to be formed and funded. When the CMTO is ready to administer applications, ABMP will inform members. According to the new law, the soonest the CMTO would be permitted to start processing applications is September 1, 2009.

SB 731 created a VOLUNTARY certification program. If you choose to apply you will have to meet general criteria. All applicants will be required to be at least 18 years old and submit to fingerprinting and a background check. If you choose not to apply for certification, you may continue to practice under your local requirements.

Please review the following to determine which case applies to you:

I have completed a minimum of 500 hours of massage education, OR I have passed an exam that may be approved by the CMTO.

Title: Certified Massage Therapist (CMT)

There are 2 ways to qualify for state certification as a Massage Therapist.

1. By having completed a minimum of 500 hours of training. Of the 500 hours, at least 250 hours must have been completed at state approved schools. The other 250 hours could be obtained through approved or registered schools or approved continuing education providers.
2. By having passed a massage and bodywork exam. It is unclear at this time which exam or exams may be approved by the CMTO because the CMTO has not yet been formed. Potential candidate exams include the Massage and Bodywork Licensing Exam (MBLEx) offered by the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) and the exams offered by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB).

I have completed 250 – 499 hours of massage training.

Individuals may qualify for Certified Massage Practitioner status through December 31, 2015. After that date, CMP's may renew their certification without having to obtain additional massage education, but no new CMP certifications will be issued. After December 31, 2015, in order to qualify for certification, all applicants will have to complete a minimum of 500 hours training or pass an exam approved by the MTO. In other words, only the certified massage therapist tier will be available after December 31, 2015.

Title: Certified Massage Practitioner (CMP)

The CMP requires successful completion, *at a single state approved or registered school*, of a program that is no less than 250 hours. The program must include at least 100 hours devoted to anatomy and physiology, contraindications, health and hygiene and business and ethics. ***I have completed at least 100 hours of documented training but not 250 hours.***

Title: Certified Massage Practitioner

Before January 1, 2012, you can qualify as a massage practitioner by meeting ONE of the following:

3. You have completed a minimum 100 hour massage course at a state approved or registered school, AND you have a valid local massage permit or license, AND you have been practicing for at least 3

- years, AND you document that you have provided a minimum of 1,000 hours of massage to the public for compensation; OR
4. You have completed a minimum 100 hour course at a state approved or registered school, AND you have been practicing for at least 3 years, AND you have provided a minimum 1,750 hours of massage to the public for compensation; OR
 5. You possess a current valid certificate of authorization as an instructor at an approved massage school.

You will be able to provide evidence of practice by providing either W-2 forms or employer's affidavit containing the dates of your employment OR tax returns indicating self-employment as a massage practitioner or massage therapist.

I have completed 100 hours of education but have not practiced long enough professionally to qualify.

If you have completed a 100 hour massage course but have not obtained the 1000-1750 hours of practice for compensation, prior to January 1, 2012, you may apply for a conditional certificate. If you apply for a conditional certification you will be required to complete at least 30 hours of additional education per year from an approved or registered school until you have completed at least 250 hours of education.

Once you reach 250 hours of massage education, including the hours you already have completed, The CMTO will grant you a certificate as a massage practitioner that is not conditional. If you do not comply with the education requirement, your conditional certification will be revoked.

I have completed at least 250 hours of massage education but not at a single approved massage school and/or not including at least 100 hours in required subject areas.

You may apply for a conditional certificate. Once receiving it, you may submit to the CMTO a listing of additional massage education hours. Once the CMTO validates these hours, it will replace your conditional certificate with one that is not conditional. (NOTE: This seems an unnecessary two-step process. Potentially the CMTO may realize this and streamline the process.)

How do I know if my school is approved or registered?

Schools approved by the state, part of the state higher education system, accredited by a Department of Education approved accreditation agency, or similarly approved by another state would be considered approved schools. The CMTO will have some flexibility in evaluating whether an applicant's education is sufficient. California still has not reestablished a bureau to oversee the operation of private postsecondary and vocational schools to replace the former Bureau of Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (BPPVE).

What will be the cost of a statewide massage certification?

It will be up to the CMTO to decide specifics, but the legislation directs that organization to "establish fees reasonably related to the cost of providing services and carrying out its ongoing responsibilities and duties." Looking at what other states charge for massage licenses suggests that the California cost likely should not exceed \$100 per year.

Local Licensing

For both tiers, SB 731 provides that those certified are exempted from local licensing. For certified practitioners who are considered to be sole proprietors and for businesses hiring only certified practitioners or therapists, SB 731 also requires that zoning and building requirements be the same as for other professional and personal service professions.

Steps you can take right now to become prepared:

- Contact your school for a copy of your transcripts. Keep these in the sealed envelope they come in.
- Gather any certificates or documentation for continuing education courses you have completed.
- If you plan to qualify by demonstrating hours of massage provided for compensation, keep your appointment books and tax records to aid in such demonstration.