

MASSAGE THERAPY TRAINING IN SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU ENROLL



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THE SOUTH CAROLINA LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING MASSAGE THERAPY PRACTITIONERS AND SCHOOLS OFFERING MASSAGE THERAPY PROGRAMS:

- Massage/Bodywork Practice Act, Act No. 387, enacted by the 1996 General Assembly, South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, as amended, Sections 10 through 320, Chapter 30, Title 40. This law provides the parameters for the licensure of persons who practice massage/bodywork therapy under the authority of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR).
- Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, Regulations 100 through 150 of Chapter 77, approved by the 1998 General Assembly, include specific provisions to implement the Massage/Bodywork Practice Act.
- Nonpublic Postsecondary Institution License Act, Act No. 497, enacted by the 1992 General Assembly, South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, as amended, Sections 10 through 140, Chapter 58, Title 59. <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c058.php> This law provides the parameters for the licensure of institutions offering academic, occupation, business or other programs of study under the authority of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE).
- CHE Regulations 1 through 28 of Chapter 62, <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/c062.php> include specific provisions to implement the Nonpublic Postsecondary Institution License Act.

TO BECOME A LICENSED MASSAGE THERAPIST

For LLR to license a person as a massage/bodywork therapist, he or she must:

- (1) Be at least 18 years old and have received a high school diploma or GED,
- (2) Have completed a 500-hour course of supervised study at an approved school, and
- (3) Have received a passing grade on an approved examination.

Note: Students who complete any portion of their massage therapy training via distance learning are not eligible for SC licensure.

The Massage/Bodywork Practice Act also includes circumstances of misconduct under which LLR denies initial licensure, for example, a person who has been convicted of or has pled guilty to or nolo contendere to a felony or crime that directly relates to the practice or ability to practice massage/body. See Section 40-30-230 of the Act for other actions that are "misconduct."

EVALUATING A SCHOOL

Definitions:

- Licensed. Licensure is typically a mandatory (imposed by law) governmental process. A school licensed to operate in SC means that it has met the minimal standards (curriculum content, instructor requirements, facilities, equipment, record keeping, surety bond, financial resources, insurance) and provides accurate and useful information to students.
- Accredited. Accreditation is a non-governmental, voluntary, peer evaluation process. To become accredited by an appropriately recognized accrediting agency, institutions and programs must

show that they meet certain standards established by the accrediting agency. Accrediting agencies should not be confused with membership associations. Accreditation does not provide automatic transfer of credit earned at another institution, nor does it give assurance of acceptance by employers. CHE does not accredit institutions; it licenses institutions that meet the standards prescribed by statute and regulation.

"Institutional" accrediting agencies establish standards for the entire institution.

"Program" or "specialized" accrediting agencies establish standards that apply to programs, departments, or schools for specific fields of study.

- Recognized. The US Department of Education (USED) reviews and recognizes accrediting agencies. Accreditation by a USED recognized accrediting agency is one criterion for institutional eligibility for Federal Title IV (student financial aid) funds. Accredited schools may or may not be eligible to participate in student financial aid programs. USED list of accredited schools and approved agencies: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html>
- Certified. Certification usually refers to a voluntary process and is granted by professional organizations that administer tests developed in consultation with authorities in the field. The terms "certified/certification" and "certificate" are not interchangeable. Providers of training issue certificates of completion to show successful completion of a course of study.



HOW TO DECIDE

- ✓ Get a copy of the catalog from each school you are considering and read them carefully so that you know about each school's curriculum, policies, fees, and procedures.
- ✓ All massage therapy programs CHE licenses in SC must teach a curriculum designed to prepare graduates to take a qualifying licensure exam. The curriculum at each school determines the exam(s) for which the school prepares students. Scope of practices prescribed by various jurisdictions may not allow some modalities. Each school is unique, so choose the one that best fits your needs.
- ✓ Only primary health care professionals perform diagnosis and prescribe treatment. Longer programs teach the massage professional to work effectively with a physician, physical therapist, or other health care professional.
- ✓ Visit all schools you are considering; talk to administrative personnel, students, and instructors. Look at equipment and facilities to see if they are similar to what you expect to use on the job.
- ✓ Visit a class or two. See if the atmosphere is one in which you will be comfortable. Before you visit a class, check with the instructor or school.
- ✓ Contact health care providers or licensed massage therapists about employment or self-employment prospects.
- ✓ Inquire about drop-out-rates and graduation rates. Ask for the pass rates on the licensure qualification exams for the graduates of the school.

WHILE YOU'RE ENROLLED

Students who perform massage as a part of their curriculum (whether on or off the school premises) must wear a nametag identifying themselves as students and naming the school that enrolls them. Students may not receive compensation (including tips) and may not advertise (including business cards) until they are licensed.



AFTER YOU GRADUATE

Massage therapy school graduates cannot practice massage therapy for remuneration until they have received their licenses from LLR.

The process for licensure is:

- Meet all requirements for graduation
- Send application for licensure exam with required documentation
- Receive 'eligibility' letter
- Register to take exam with local test center (eligibility to test expires 90 days after notification)
- Take and pass exam
- Send application to LLR with required documentation
- Receive License from LLR. You may use the letters "LMT" after your name
- Begin practice for remuneration

CONTINUING EDUCATION

LLR accepts continuing education hours from:

- ❖ Schools operating in the State
- ❖ NCBTMB approved providers
- ❖ AMTA approved providers
- ❖ Approved individuals (contact LLR)

AS A LMT...

Read and thoroughly understand the laws governing your practice. LLR will give you a copy of the Massage Therapy Practice Act, or you can access a copy of the Act online: <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t40c030.php> and the regulations at <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/c077.php> Clarification of the Act can be found at http://www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/MassageTherapy/index.asp?file=interpretations_of_the_massage_p.htm

1) Your first license is issued for one year or a portion of a year (depending on when you apply) and will expire in June. Subsequent licenses will be issued for two years. You will not be required to submit proof of continuing education to renew if your license was issued for a portion of a year. Check with LLR for your particular situation. The State requires that you obtain 12 hours of continuing education during each two-year licensing period in order to be eligible to renew your license for the next two years.

2) Any advertising that you do (telephone book, business cards, newspapers, etc.) must reference your SC License number.

3) Professional organizations offer various benefits to members. Some offer group rate liability insurance (rates vary), national and state conventions, networking opportunities, advertising specials, and/or reduced costs for continuing education. Compare rates and benefits and choose according to your needs.

4) Stay informed about any changes or decisions that will affect your profession.



CONTACTS:

Massage therapist licensure, a copy of the law and regulations, or for an application for licensure:

SC Dept. of Labor, Licensing & Regulation; Office of Business and Related Services; P. O. Box 11329; Columbia, SC 29211-1329 Phone: 803.896.4494 Web site: www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/MassageTherapy/

School licensure or a list of schools licensed in SC

SC Commission on Higher Education; Postsecondary Institution Licensing; 1122 Lady Street, Suite 300; Columbia, SC 29201; Phone: 803.737.2260 Web site: http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/AcademicAffairs/License/List_licensed_MT_schls.pdf

Examination

Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB); 150 Fourth Avenue North, Suite 800; Nashville, TN 37219; P. O. Box 198689, Nashville, TN 37219-8689 Phone: 866.962.3926 Web site: <http://www.fsmtb.org>

Professional membership organizations

American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) 820 Davis Street, Suite 100; Evanston, IL 60201-4444 Phone 847.864.0123 Web site: www.amtamassage.org

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP); 1271 Sugarbush Drive, Evergreen, CO 80439-9766 Phone 800.458-2267 Web site: www.abmp.com

International Massage Association (IMA) 25 South Fourth Street, P. O. Drawer 421, Warrenton, VA 20188 Phone 800.933.7113 Web site: www.imagroup.com

National Board Certification

National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB); 8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 300; McLean, VA 22102 Phone: 703.610.9015 or 800.296.0664 Web site: <http://www.ncbtmb.com>