

Approved Provider Standards of Practice

Background

The purpose of the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) is to foster high standards of ethical and professional practice in the delivery of services and continuing education through a recognized credible Approved Provider program that assures the competency of educators of therapeutic massage and bodywork continuing education.

These Approved Provider Standards of Practice ensure that Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status are aware of, and committed to, upholding high standards of practice for the profession. Also, the Approved Provider Standards of Practice are meant to assist members of the profession, including consumers, other health care professionals, and state and municipal regulatory agencies or boards with understanding the duties and responsibilities of NCBTMB Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status.

The NCBTMB developed and adopted the Approved Provider Standards of Practice to provide Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status with a clear statement of the expectations of professional conduct and level of practice afforded the profession in, among other things, the following areas: Professionalism, Legal and Ethical Requirements, Confidentiality, Business Practices, Roles and Boundaries, and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct. These Approved Provider Standards of Practice were approved and ratified by the NCBTMB Board of Directors, representatives of the Approved Provider population and key stakeholders of the NCBTMB.

Preamble

These Approved Provider Standards of Practice for the profession of therapeutic massage and bodywork are the guiding principles by which Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status conduct their day-to-day responsibilities within their scope of practice. These principles help to assure that all professional behaviors are conducted in the most ethical, compassionate, and responsible manner. Through these Approved Provider Standards of Practice, NCBTMB seeks to establish and uphold high standards, traditions, and principles of the practices that constitute the profession of therapeutic massage and bodywork and continuing education. The Standards are enforceable guidelines for professional conduct, and therefore, are stated in observable and measurable terms intended as minimum levels of practice to which Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status are held accountable. Upon submission of the application to become an Approved Provider, each applicant for Approved Provider status must agree to uphold and abide by the NCBTMB Approved Provider Code of Ethics, Approved Provider Standards of Practice and applicable policies. Approved Providers or applicants for Approved Provider status failure to comply with the Approved Provider Code of Ethics and the Approved Provider Standards of Practice as provided herein constitutes professional misconduct and may result in sanctions, or other appropriate disciplinary actions, including the suspension or revocation of Approved Provider status.

NCBTMB certificants, Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status are obligated to report unethical behavior and violations of the Approved Provider Code of Ethics and/or the Approved Provider Standards of Practice they reasonably and in good faith believe have been performed by other NCBTMB Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status to NCBTMB.



These Approved Provider Standards of Practice reflect NCBTMB's clear commitment that Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status provide an optimal level of service and strive for excellence in their businesses. This includes remaining in good standing with NCBTMB, committing to continued personal and professional growth through continuing education, and understanding and accepting that personal and professional actions reflect on the integrity of the therapeutic massage and bodywork profession and NCBTMB. Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status are responsible for showing and maintaining professional compliance with the Approved Provider Standards of Practice.

NCBTMB requires Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status to conduct themselves in a highly professional and dignified manner. NCBTMB will not consider and/or adjudicate complaints against Approved Providers and applicants for Approved Provider status that are based solely on consumer related issues or are based on competitive marketplace issues.

As the therapeutic massage and bodywork profession evolves, so, too, will the Approved Provider Standards of Practice. The Approved Provider Standards of Practice are, therefore, a live and dynamic document and subject to revision in keeping with the changing demands and expectations of the therapeutic massage and bodywork profession.

Standards of Practice

Standard I: Professionalism

The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status must provide optimal levels of professional therapeutic massage and bodywork continuing education and demonstrate expert knowledge in specific modalities taught by seeking continuous education of each subject taught. Massage therapy and bodywork modalities must always be within the massage therapist's/bodyworker's scope of practice and taught ethically and non-judgmentally to other professionals in the field. In his/her professional role the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall:

- a. adhere to the NCBTMB Approved Provider Code of Ethics, Approved Provider Standards of Practice, policies and procedures
- b. comply with the peer review process conducted by the NCBTMB Approved Provider Committee regarding any alleged violations of the NCBTMB Approved Provider Standards of Practice
- c. comply with the peer review process conducted by the NCBTMB Ethics & Standards Committee regarding any alleged violations of the NCBTMB Approved Provider Code of Ethics
- d. treat each student with respect, dignity and worth
- e. use professional verbal, nonverbal and written communications
- f. provide an environment that is safe and comfortable for the student and which, at a minimum, meets all legal requirements for health and safety
- g. use standard precautions to insure professional hygienic practices and maintain a level of personal hygiene appropriate for continuing education providers in the therapeutic setting
- h. wear clothing that is clean, modest, and professional
- i. obtain voluntary and informed consent from students prior to initiating the lab/clinical portions of the class
- j. if applicable, conduct an accurate needs assessment, develop a curriculum, and update the curriculum as needed
- k. require that students use appropriate draping techniques to protect other students' physical and emotional privacy while in the classroom, lab/clinical setting
- l. be knowledgeable of the subject being taught and teach within the massage therapist's scope of practice
- m. respect the traditions and practices of other Approved Providers

- n. not falsely impugn the reputation of any other Approved Provider
- o. use the initials NCBTMB only to designate his/her status as an Approved Provider
- p. remain in good standing with NCBTMB
- q. understand that the NCBTMB Approved Provider certificate may be displayed prominently in the Approved Provider's business
- r. use the NCBTMB Approved Provider logo and approval number on business cards, brochures, advertisements, and stationery only in a manner that is within established NCBTMB guidelines
- s. not duplicate the NCBTMB Approved Provider certificate for purposes other than verification of the Approved Provider's status
- t. immediately return the certificate to NCBTMB if Approved Provider status is revoked
- u. inform NCBTMB of any changes or additions to information included in his/her application for NCBTMB Approved Provider status or renewal of status

Standard II: Legal and Ethical Requirements

The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status must comply with all the legal requirements in applicable jurisdictions regulating the profession of therapeutic massage and bodywork. In his/her professional role the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall:

- a. obey all applicable local, state, and federal laws
- b. refrain from any behavior that results in illegal, discriminatory, or unethical actions
- c. accept responsibility for his/her own actions
- d. report to the proper authorities any alleged violations of the law by other Approved Providers, certificants or applicants for Approved Provider status
- e. maintain accurate and truthful records
- f. report to NCBTMB any criminal conviction of, or plea of guilty, nolo contendere, or no contest to, a crime in any jurisdiction (other than a minor traffic offense) by him/herself and by other Approved Providers, certificants or applicants for Approved Provider status
- g. report to NCBTMB any pending litigation and resulting resolution related to the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider's status professional practice and the professional practice of other Approved Providers, certificants or applicants for Approved Provider status
- h. report to NCBTMB any pending complaints in any state or local government or quasi-government board or agency against his/her professional conduct or competence, or that of another Approved Provider, and the resulting resolution of such complaint

Standard III: Confidentiality

The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall respect the confidentiality of student information and safeguard all records. In his/her professional role the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall:

- a. protect the confidentiality of the student's identity in conversations, all advertisements, and any and all other matters unless disclosure of identifiable information is requested by the student in writing, is medically necessary, is required by law or for purposes of public protection
- b. solicit only information that is relevant to the professional student/Approved Provider relationship
- c. share pertinent information about the student with third parties when required by law or for purposes of public protection
- d. maintain the student files for a minimum period of four years
- e. store and dispose of student files in a secure manner

Standard IV: Business Practices

The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall teach with honesty, integrity, and lawfulness in the business of therapeutic massage and bodywork continuing education. In his/her professional role the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall:

- a. provide a physical setting that is safe and meets all applicable legal requirements for health and safety
- b. maintain adequate and customary liability insurance
- c. maintain adequate records and required documentation for each student
- d. accurately and truthfully inform the profession of courses provided
- e. honestly represent all professional qualifications and affiliations
- f. promote his/her business with integrity and avoid potential and actual conflicts of interest
- g. advertise in a manner that is honest, dignified, accurate and representative of services that can be delivered and remains consistent with the NCBTMB Approved Provider Code of Ethics and Approved Provider Standards of Practice
- h. advertise in a manner that is not misleading to the profession and shall not use sensational, sexual or provocative language and/or pictures to promote business or in the learning environment
- i. comply with all laws regarding sexual harassment
- j. not exploit the trust and dependency of others, including students and employees/co-workers
- k. display/discuss a schedule of fees in advance of the session that is clearly understood by the student or potential student
- l. make financial arrangements in advance that are clearly understood by and safeguard the best interests of the student
- m. have clearly defined cancelation and refund policies
- n. follow acceptable accounting practices
- o. file all applicable municipal, state and federal taxes
- p. maintain accurate financial records, contracts and legal obligations, continuing education course records, tax reports, copies of certificates, transcripts and receipts for at least four years

Standard V: Roles and Boundaries

The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall adhere to ethical boundaries and perform the professional roles designed to protect both the student and the Approved Provider, and safeguard the professional relationship between the student and Approved Provider. In his/her professional role the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall:

- a. recognize his/her personal limitations and teach course only within these limitations
- b. recognize his/her influential position with students and not exploit the relationship for personal or other gain
- c. recognize and limit the impact of transference and counter-transference between the Approved Provider and students
- d. avoid dual or multidimensional relationships that could impair professional judgment or result in exploitation of students or employees and/or coworkers
- e. not engage in any sexual activity with any student
- f. refrain from teaching under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substances (with the exception of a prescribed dosage of prescription medication which does not impair the Approved Provider)
- g. have the right to refuse and/or terminate a class with a student who is abusive or under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substance

Standard VI: Prevention of Sexual Misconduct

The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall refrain from any behavior that sexualizes, or appears to sexualize, the student/Approved Provider relationship. The Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status recognizes the intimacy of the student/Approved Provider or student/student relationship may activate needs and/or desires that weaken objectivity and may lead to sexualizing the therapeutic relationship. In his/her professional role the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status shall:

- a. refrain from participating in a sexual relationship or sexual conduct with the student, whether consensual or otherwise, from the beginning of the student/Approved Provider relationship and for a minimum of six months after the course end date unless a pre-existing relationship exists between the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status and student prior to the Approved Provider or applicant for Approved Provider status applying for Approved Provider status by NCBTMB
- b. in the event that the student initiates sexual behavior, clarify the purpose of the continuing education course, and, if such conduct does not cease, terminate or refuse the student for further courses
- c. recognize that sexual activity with students, employees, supervisors, or trainees is prohibited even if consensual
- d. not touch the genitalia
- e. only teach therapeutic treatments within the massage therapy scope of practice

Glossary of Terms

Acceptable Accounting Procedures: Rules, conventions, standards, and procedures that are widely accepted among financial accountants.

Boundary: A boundary is a limit that separates one person from another. Its function is to protect the integrity of each person.

Competency: Study and development of a particular professional knowledge base and skills associated with and applied in practice within that knowledge base.

Counter-Transference: A practitioner's unresolved feelings and issues which are unconsciously transferred to the student or client.

Dignity: The quality or state of being worthy, honored or esteemed.

Dual Relationships: An alliance in addition to the student/Approved Provider relationship, such as social, familial, business or any other relationship that is outside the therapeutic relationship.

Genitalia, Female: Labia majora, labia minora, clitoris and vaginal orifice.

Genitalia, Male: Testes, penis and scrotum.

Impugn: To assail by words or arguments, oppose or attack as false.

Integrity: Honesty. Firm adherence to a code of values.

Multidimensional Relationships: Overlapping relationships in which the Approved Provider and student share an alliance, in addition to the instructor/student relationship.

Sexual Activity: Any verbal and/or nonverbal behavior for the purpose of soliciting, receiving or giving sexual gratification.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: 1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; 2. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals; or 3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Scope of Practice: The minimum standards necessary for safe and effective practice and the parameters of practice determined by the Approved Provider's/student's professional training and education, and, when applicable, regulatory bodies.

Therapeutic Breast Massage: Manipulation of the non-muscular soft tissue structure of the breast up to and including the areola and nipple.

Transference: The displacement or transfer of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors originally related to a significant person, such as a parent, onto someone else, such as a massage therapist (or doctor, psychotherapist, teacher, spiritual advisor, etc.).