

Massage therapists are already regulated in Virginia. Why do we need to become licensed?

- Increasingly, states are moving toward licensure of MTs. Currently, 40 states license MTs.
- Licensure is the most appropriate form of regulation of MTs because MTs work autonomously and usually in privacy. Therefore, there is a potential risk of public harm, and licensure provides a means for the state to regulate the practice of MTs.
- Licensure conveys protection of scope of practice. Only individuals who are licensed (or exempt from licensure) are permitted to perform that scope of practice. Therefore, the public is further protected from the unregulated practice of individuals who claim to be massage therapists but have not achieved licensure.

How does licensure protect the public?

- Licensure is the means by which the Commonwealth regulates the practice of a profession or occupation that has the potential to endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public if the practice were to be unregulated.
- The public is assured that the individuals who are regulated meet certain requirements verifying their competence and safety in practice.
- If a person receiving services from a regulated practitioner believes that the massage has been unsafe and/or unethical, the massage recipient has the ability to lodge a complaint against the regulated practitioner through the Department of Health Professions

If massage therapists become licensed in Virginia, will MT licensure applicants be required to take the MT licensure examination, the MBLEx, in order to become licensed?

- Licensed massage therapists in other states should be able to become licensed in Virginia without additional requirements, pending renewal of their licensure status and credentials by the Board of Nursing.
- The proposed law will enable the Board of Nursing to accept a variety of established examinations for licensure, including the NCBTMB certification examination and the MBLEx, the licensing examination developed by the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards.

If I am already certified as a MT in Virginia, will I have to take another examination or other requirements to become licensed?

- If you are already certified and in good standing, meeting the continued education requirements for certification in Virginia, you will not need to take another examination or meet other requirements. You will automatically be granted a license when your renewal date occurs.

Will the licensure law require that MTs obtain additional education beyond the requirements currently listed in the law?

- No. The proposed law will have the same requirements as are currently in effect.
- The current law requires that MTs successfully complete a minimum of 500 hours of training from a massage therapy program that is certified or approved by the State Council of Higher Education or an agency in another state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory that approves educational programs.

If massage therapists become licensed in Virginia, would I be prevented from practicing different forms of bodywork?

- No, so long as the bodywork is consistent with the definition of massage and bodywork that is in the law. The Commonwealth will not regulate other forms of bodywork that lie outside of that definition.

Will licensure in Virginia mean that my fees will be increased?

- No. Like all the other regulatory boards in the Department of Health Professions, the Board of Nursing operates solely on fees collected from individuals whom it regulates: RNs, LPNs, LNPs, CMTs, and CNAs. When the Board cannot meet its financial obligations, it announces through the state's regulatory process that it intends to raise fees. This process takes about two years to complete. But licensure itself will not raise the fees because no additional staff work is expected to take place with licensure.

Will licensure mean that massage therapists need to have their own regulatory board?

- No. There are insufficient numbers of massage therapists in Virginia to support the operations of a totally separate regulatory board.

Will licensure status mean that we will not have to abide by local ordinances?

- No. You will still have to abide by local ordinances. However, if you believe that the local ordinance conflicts with the licensure law of the state, you should seek a change in the local ordinance. Localities cannot issue or maintain local ordinances that conflict with state laws.

If massage therapists become licensed in Virginia, would we be able to automatically accept insurance for massage?

- Licensure and insurance reimbursement are two entirely different subjects. Licensure does not automatically mean that you can seek reimbursement. However, some insurance policies reimburse for therapies by “licensed” providers, and you may be able to seek reimbursement.
- In order to become a “mandated” provider for insurance purposes, you would need to seek a change in another section of Virginia law.

Will licensure eliminate the advertisements and practice of unlicensed massage practitioners?

- No. There will be individuals practicing massage who are not regulated by the Department of Health Professions.
- These individuals, if caught and prosecuted, will be breaking the law; that is, they will be practicing massage without a license.