



# STANDARDIZED LICENSURE RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

*for*

# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

## INTRODUCTION

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This is a recommendation for a licensure renewal model with an emphasis on professional competence for the ultimate benefit of the consuming public. This recommendation does not change any current regulation or requirements for continuing education. Only State Massage Therapy Boards and Agencies can make changes to their rules and only through the regulatory process. Therapists are still bound by existing laws and rules that govern continuing education for licensure renewal purposes. This recommendation represents a culmination of research and guidance from a variety of experts, including therapists, consumers, educators and professional associations.

The Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) serves the State massage therapy boards and regulatory agencies in the United States and territories. The mission of FSMTB is to support its member boards in fulfilling their mandate of public protection.

The FSMTB's member boards requested assistance in supporting efforts between jurisdictions to establish compatible requirements and cooperative procedures for the regulation of massage and bodywork therapists. By creating the Massage and Bodywork Licensing Exam (MBLEx) specifically for entry-level licensure, the FSMTB has assisted member boards in the facilitation of licensure portability by simplifying and standardizing one component of the initial licensing process. The next phase in addressing licensure portability is to establish standardized requirements for licensure renewal.

## RESEARCH

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In response to the request from member boards, the FSMTB appointed a Task Force representing State regulators, educators and massage therapists to discuss the future of what is often referred to as continuing education in the massage therapy profession.

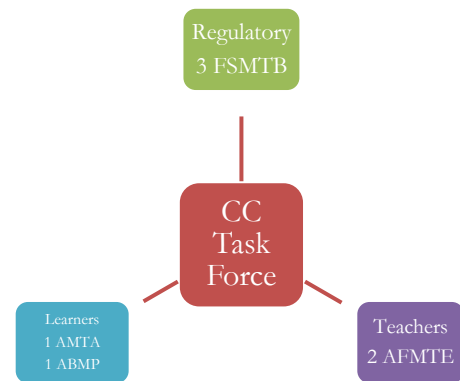
The Task Force was comprised of representative stakeholders important to this project:

The FSMTB members represented the collective State Member Boards that requested this system be explored. Their task was to make sure that the system met the needs of the regulatory community.

The Alliance for Massage Therapy Education represented the educators.

The professional membership organizations – Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals and the American Massage Therapy Association – represented the therapists/learners.

The Task Force met in January 2012 to examine the continuing education and licensure renewal process and to shape a strategy for the future. The goal was to ensure that the system was streamlined, fair and manageable, that it honored legal needs of the regulatory community, and that the system delivered quality education to the learner.



### Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force recommended that the focus of licensure renewal requirements shift from requiring continuing education hours to maintaining core competencies. The best way to ensure public protection is to address competencies for safe and professional practice and areas identified as requiring regulatory intervention and guidance.

The Task Force also recommended that continuing education and professional development continue to be the focus of activities offered by professional educators, volunteer membership and voluntary certification organizations. The role of the FSMTB would remain focused on the public safety issues that concern regulatory agencies and not on professional development or advanced education.

The Task Force recommendations were presented to the FSMTB board of directors. The information was then disseminated for public comment. Feedback was specifically sought from the state regulatory boards and agencies, public advocacy groups, therapists, educators and professional membership associations.

### **FSMTB RECOMMENDATION**

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Upon consideration of the Task Force recommendations and related public feedback, the FSMTB recommends that ongoing education in ethics and professional practice be required for license renewal, with the option to include professional development activities.

*Licensed massage and bodywork therapists will be required to complete six (6) hours of license renewal requirements annually. At least three (3) of the six hours must meet the State-sponsored Ethics and Professional Practice course requirements that specifically address content pertaining to public safety. The remaining three (3) hours could be exchanged for certain Professional Development Activities, including but not limited to meeting accredited certification standards, community service, and research.*

## Standards for Ethics and Professional Practice

Creation of course content pertaining to Ethics and Professional Practice would be a function of the Federation and approved by the member boards. This ensures that the information is accurate, reliable and specifically meets the needs of the member boards in their efforts to protect the public. It also gives the regulatory boards and agencies specific jurisdictional authority over content and delivery.

## Standards for Professional Development Activities

The FSMTB acknowledges the desirability of enhancing and elevating the massage professional to instill consumer confidence. The role of professional development is primarily that of the membership and voluntary certification organizations. For any States that wish to include activities beyond the State-sponsored courses in Ethics and Professional Practice for licensure renewal, the FSMTB will establish standards for acceptance of professional development activities, including those offered by membership and voluntary certification organizations.

## Rationale

This recommendation creates a new model specifically designed for regulatory needs regarding public protection. It standardizes the licensure renewal requirements which facilitate uniformity and portability of licensure. Licensure renewal requirements for therapists will be simplified. The economic burden on the therapist to maintain licensure is reduced although therapists are encouraged to pursue additional, non-mandatory professional development of their choosing. This recommendation increases consumer confidence in the professional integrity of the licensee while promoting current knowledge of safe practices and increasing access to quality education.

## **CONCLUSION**

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These recommendations for best practices are based on a thorough analysis of the current professional, educational, and regulatory environment. Individual states will always have the ability to regulate their licensees as they deem appropriate. These recommendations exemplify and reinforce the core values and commitments of the FSMTB with regard to public protection, service to our members and the competent individuals who comprise the profession. Among many benefits, it will support the therapist in professional practice, enhance consumer confidence, and simplify and standardize the process for licensure renewal in the future.