

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ'S)**

About Business and Professions Code Chapter 10.5 : The Massage Certification Act and the California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC)

*(updated December 2011)*

### **What does the law do?**

It mandates the creation of the California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC – formerly known as the MTO or Massage Therapy Organization), which issues a new, voluntary, state-recognized massage therapy certification.

### **What is the difference between this certification and my current license/permit?**

Local licenses/permits currently allow massage therapists to practice only in the city or county that issues them. A CAMTC-issued certificate will permit you to practice anywhere in the state without getting a separate permit for each locale.

### **Do I have to get this certificate?**

No. Certification under the CAMTC is voluntary. However more cities and counties are mandating certification to practice in their jurisdictions. And you cannot legally use the title “Certified Massage Therapist” without being certified by CAMTC.

### **How long does it take to become certified?**

This depends very much on the number of applications the CAMTC is receiving and the amount of review your application requires. For the most current answer to this question, go to [www.camtc.org](http://www.camtc.org).

### **Will I still have to get a city permit?**

If you do not get CAMTC certified, then yes, you will still be subject to local ordinances, as you are now.

If you do get CAMTC certified, no, you will not also need a local permit. You will, however, have to follow all other general business requirements that apply to all similar local businesses, i.e., obtaining a business license, following zoning, health and safety ordinances, etc.

### **Will I still need to get a business license?**

If you own your own business, yes. A CAMTC-issued certificate will give you permission to practice anywhere, but it does not replace your business license. If you are simply an employee of another person’s business, then you do not need a business license.

**What is the difference between a Certification and a License?**

A license is mandatory, and a certification is not. A license is created by a kind of law called a “practice act”, and only those who hold the license can practice in the field in question. A certification, like this one, is created by a “title act”, and it only governs the titles that can be used. So, under this law, anyone who is practicing legally under local laws will be able to continue to practice, but only those who get the certification will be able to use titles like Certified Massage Therapist (CMT), Certified Massage Practitioner (CMP), Certified Bodywork Therapist, or Certified Bodywork Practitioner, in California.

**What is the difference between this certification and state certification?**

Under state certification, an agency or board that is part of the California state government would issue certificates. Under this law, a non-governmental, non-profit agency, the CAMTC, issues certificates, and the state of California will recognize those certificates as legitimate.

**Can I still call myself a Certified Massage Therapist or Certified Massage Practitioner?**

In the State of California, as of September 1, 2009, only those who hold the state-recognized certifications issued by the CAMTC will be able to legally call themselves things like Certified Massage Practitioner (CMP) or Certified Massage Therapist (CMT). Up to now, the term Certified Massage Therapist/Practitioner has actually had no legal meaning state-wide. It might have meant that someone was issued a certificate by their school, or it might have meant that they were certified by their city or county. Now the title will be recognized throughout California as referring to someone who has certified through the CAMTC.

**What will the fee for this certificate be?**

As of this posting, in February of 2010, \$150 for the initial application (plus fees for fingerprinting and obtaining transcripts), then \$150 for renewal every two years.

**How often will it have to be renewed?**

Every two years, by email or mail, if there are no extenuating circumstances.

**Who sits on the California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC)?**

Representatives of the massage therapy industry, law enforcement, cities and counties, consumers, and massage schools, among others. More specifically, two representatives each from both AMTA and ABMP, and, unless any of the following chooses to waive their right to it, a representative each from the League

of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Community College Chancellor's office, and any incorporated association of private postsecondary schools that collectively have graduated at least 1,000 massage students in each of the last three years.

### **Do I have to take the National Certification Exam or the MBLEx to get CAMTC certified?**

No. Passing one of the two tests offered by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (the NCETM or NCETMB) or the test offered by the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (the MBLEx) is one way to qualify for certification, but it is not mandatory.

### **What are the requirements for getting CAMTC certified?**

**! IMPORTANT TIP: Highly recommended for massage professionals whose finger pad whorls may be smoothed down and more difficult to get a clear print--> GO to your local Police Department or Sheriff's Department for your LiveScan fingerprinting. You will learn immediately if you have a poor or unclear scan and your fingerprints will be re-scanned right away. Otherwise, your application may be delayed by weeks (or even months) because the FBI is unable to report on the results to the CAMTC.**

There is a lovely chart available at [www.camtc.org](http://www.camtc.org) that answers this clearly and thoroughly. In the meantime, here is a summary:

- **Massage Practitioner**
  - 250 hrs of training at one approved school (\*see below regarding approved schools)
  - No new Massage Practitioner certificates issued after 5 years (after 2014)
  - After that tier is phased out, Practitioner certificate still valid for practice as long as it is kept current (there may be additional education requirements at some point to bring it to the MT level)
  - Renewal every 2 years
    - Fingerprinting

- **Massage Therapist**

- Education (must have A, B, or C)

- A. 500 hours of training

- At least 250 at one approved school

- Remaining 250 from registered or approved schools or approved CEU providers

- After 5 years (2014), all 500 hours must be obtained from approved schools

- B. Or must have passed approved exam and submit proof of at least 2 years of work experience

- C. Or have Registration, Certification, or License from state with greater or equal requirements

- Renewal every 2 years

- Fingerprinting

**Why are the educational requirements not higher?**

Passing a law is all about compromise. When the process of writing the law started, there were over 220 schools teaching massage in CA, the vast majority teaching 100-200 hour programs. Some organizations and individuals expressed a fear that requiring more than 250 hours of education would put a lot of people out of business. The legislature felt that 250 hours of education was the minimum that would be acceptable for a profession, and they decided to phase out the lower (250-hour) tier in 5 years.

**Why are the educational requirements not lower?**

Passing a law is all about compromise. There are some areas in California that have no educational requirements, there are others that have a 1,000-hour requirement at the upper limit. The educational requirements for state licensing in at least 43 states, plus Washington, D.C., are 500 hours. The requirement is an attempt to bring California in line with the majority of the country, simplify relocation to a new area, elevate the perception of the profession, and raise the bar for the profession of massage therapy.

### **Why is fingerprinting required?**

Compromise. Law enforcement was unlikely to support the passage of SB 731 into law without this requirement. Though submitting to fingerprinting and a background check can seem onerous, members of many reputable professions, like schoolteachers, are also required to do this throughout the state. Fingerprinting will only be required one time, and renewals are processed online or by mail.

**How long will the 250-hr Certified Massage Practitioner certificate be available?** Available until December 31, 2015 at this time.

### **Does this law change anything for an establishment/business?**

The law says that if everyone working in the business is certified, then the business itself is exempt from needing any additional local establishment permit (through it still needs a business license). The business would also be exempt from some restrictive zoning and high licensing fees.

### **Does this law affect zoning for massage therapy businesses?**

The answer to this is uncertain and will only truly be determined with time. The text of the law pre-empts (overrules) unreasonable local regulations that only apply to massage therapists and not to other comparable businesses, like accounting firms and chiropractic offices. This means that you will legally be able to refuse such local requirements as STD testing or extra local background checks. But zoning laws can be trickier to navigate and change and will likely have to be fought out on a case-by-local-case basis until a common practice is established.

### **Why would I want this new certification?**

Among other reasons:

- You could use titles like CMT and CMP.
- It will be portable. If you get a new job in a new location, you will not have to apply for new local certifications/permits/licenses if you have a CAMTC-issued certificate.
- You will only have to renew every two years, rather than annually, as in many local jurisdictions.
- You would be part of establishing a single standard that would give our profession more credibility with the public. Consumers will learn that they can depend on CAMTC-certified practitioners having certain qualifications.
- Insurance companies may someday reimburse for massage therapy if they can be sure the therapist is competent. A single, statewide standard certification will give them a clear, simple way to check the therapist's qualifications
- Some cities may amend their local ordinances to require CAMTC-issued

certification, because it will streamline local bureaucracy and law enforcement.

**Will the state-recognized CAMTC-issued certification be recognized in other states?**

That will be up to each state.

**Can I still use the title HHP?**

Yes, if you obtained that title through a city or county that recognizes it. That title is not affected or governed by this new law. It is a local title, subject to local regulations.

**What if I want some aspects of the law to be changed?**

Get involved! Stay in contact with your Government Relations team and the CAMTC to make your preferences known. Get involved in local government.