

Memo: Overview and further thoughts on the rules change proposal submitted to the Board in February 2014.

Date: June 26, 2014

To: NC BMBT Board Members

From: Nancy Toner Weinberger, BS, LMBT

Dear Board Members,

Continuing education can be defined as learning experiences that enhance and expand the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of massage and bodywork therapists that enable them to render consistently competent professional service to clients. It is also defined as learning that comes after entry level learning, and thus does not include basic knowledge and skills taught in every massage school.

Continuing education for massage therapists and bodyworkers requires oversight to ensure both quality of instruction and appropriateness of course content.

Quality relates to who is teaching the educational material. Continuing education presumes to encompass education that enhances the skills and knowledge of all levels of professional expertise; therefore the standards for qualifying continuing education providers must be much higher than what we require for massage school teaching. Two years of practice is not nearly enough to qualify someone to teach at the continuing education level. And while we require teacher training for instructors in massage schools, no such requirement exists for CE instructors. Furthermore diverse topics in CE, like all specialties, require not just general experience, but professional experience specific to the content being taught.

Massage schools often distinguish themselves by offering training in specialties beyond the basics as part of their standard curriculum; this level of training has been designated continuing education, provided the persons enrolled already have status as a professional (are licensed.) Standards for qualifying CE instructors should apply to schools and organizations, as well as the entrepreneurial individual.

Appropriate CE content is partially defined in that by its very nature continuing education is above and beyond entry-level learning. It is also easily defined in terms of excluding all topics beyond the scope of practice of the LMBT. Beyond that however, boundaries become more difficult to define because of the diversity of the profession.

For example, one cannot deny that energy work is a big part of many LMBT's practice and how they work, so it makes sense to increase competence in energy work for those practitioners through continuing education classes. We have all had the experience of feeling sick after a "bad" energy work session from a therapist, or, as a therapist, taking

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on our client's headache after the massage or energy work session is over. For many, many therapists, the spontaneous awareness of energy flow during massage and bodywork arises well after massage school is over- knowing what to do suddenly becomes imperative. Yet energy work is not even regulated by the Practice Act. And at what point do energy work classes get too far out there, or take on a religious tone, such as *Reiki with the Angels*? And who should make the decision as to what is too far out- the professional massage and bodywork therapist, or some other entity such as the NC Board of Massage & Bodywork Therapy, or the NCBTMB/FSMTB? This is just one example of challenges faced in defining appropriate content for CE.

Other considerations: Continuing Education has been pretty much fully functioning in the US for many years now. Individuals and companies have their entire financial structure based on providing CE to massage therapists and bodyworkers nationwide, and pay hefty fees to be approved. Consideration is needed to ensure that financial damage does not result from decisions made by this board, especially in the current unstable economy. The vast majority of CE Providers, both individuals and organizations, want one nation-wide approval process, not multiple approvals for courses they teach. CE Providers do not understand why the NC Board is determined to go with FSMTB rather than the more evolved NCBTMB. Many Providers see the FSMTB's focus on safety and ethics as a small sub-set of what it takes for therapists to maintain competent professional skills.

Since national approval is apparently desired by everyone involved, well thought out decisions now about .0700 rule changes can provide the flexibility needed as the future unfolds. For example, keep the definitions of appropriate content very simple and then flesh the details out in a document similar to the document online defining modalities that fall under the massage law. By doing this, a simple motion and vote can determine whether a new topic is allowed for CE credit or not. The long list of defined allowed content I included in my proposal was largely a concession to Rick Rosen's already submitted content guidelines. I doubt we need something that lengthy in the rules.

The Board can also future proof the rules by including a clause in which the Board can directly approve CE Providers and/or courses. This would provide protection should a contractual agency fail, and also allow the Board to possibly approve the Jurisprudence Learning Exercise for CE.

Continued discussions amongst CE instructors are leading to rethinking the idea of one source of approval, and that multiple approval agencies might better serve the profession, so long as each agency is national in its scope. For example, the IASI and ACCOM can meet the CE needs of specific bodywork professions- general agencies cannot.

Thank you for your consideration,

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