

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF MASSAGE THERAPY

May 5, 2020

1. ROLL CALL

The conference call meeting of the Board of Massage Therapy was called to order by Brian Allison, Chair, at 4:02 p.m. in Conference Room LU1, State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska. Copies of the agenda were mailed to the Board members and other interested parties in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.

The following members answered roll call:

Members Present:

Brian Allison, Chair

Steven Carper, Vice-Chair

Mallory Carstens, Member

Michele Helaney, Secretary

Others Present:

Kris Chiles, Program Manager, Licensure Unit

Heidi Weiland, Health Licensing Coordinator, Licensure Unit

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION: Helaney moved, seconded by Carper, to adopt the agenda. A voice vote was taken. Voting aye: Allison, Carper, Carstens, Helaney (4). Voting nay: None (0). Absent: None (0). Motion carried.

3. COVID-19 INFORMATION: Board Position and Discussion regarding Massage Therapy as a Healthcare Profession; Press Releases; Directed Health Measures (state/county); Closures; Re-opening Dates and Guidance (state/county); and Executive Orders

This is a carryover conversation from the previous board meeting on 4.17.20. The board members are discussing their position regarding Massage Therapy as a healthcare profession.

Board members concerns:

Helaney is receiving many questions from the community about why massage therapy isn't the same as a healthcare profession. Why are they listed with such establishments as salons.

Carper – He's not happy that the government is lumping massage therapy with other professions. There are different types of massages performed in salons and medical facilities. The majority of massage therapy does look like a healthcare profession.

Helaney – She would push to have massage therapy be seen as a medical profession. There are questions about taxes if seen as a medical profession. If they are considered a medical profession, they wouldn't be taxed. Versus the massage therapists receiving tips for their services.

Carper – If massage therapy is considered a healthcare profession, it would eliminate future taxation bills that go through legislation. Many massage therapies rely on tips and this would eliminate tips for the therapists. No one tips their dentist or doctor.

Allison – wanted clarification of the benefit of being a healthcare provider.

Helaney – With the current COVID situation, if you were considered a medical massage therapist, you could continue practicing. Whereas the massage therapists in salons and massage establishments had to cease their practice due to the Directed Health Measure (DHM). There are a wide variety of massage practices performed in doctors offices and salons. She believes she is a

healthcare provider as she performs massages on patients with diabetes and needs to know specific information regarding the anatomy of this type of client.

Carper – The ultimate goal is the health, safety and welfare of the patients. Precautions exist in any situation by abiding to the 10 person rule and the 6 ft distancing rule.

Helaney – We are working toward gaining respect in this field. We understand the human body and know what we need to do to protect the body. A lot of massage therapists are looking for a generalized level of respect.

Carper – Part of this is educating public officials. As healthcare professionals, we are an educated person and need to know when to refer client to further treatment options. The public officials need to realize the training and school that takes place as becoming a massage therapist. We are ‘more than’ a spa therapist.

Helaney – Her hope for today’s meeting is that the board takes a stance on the next steps to determine if we are considered massage therapists or medical massage therapists.

Carper – We need to be careful with the term ‘medical.’ There are several modalities a massage therapist performs. He agrees massage therapy should be considered a healthcare profession.

Helaney – Healthcare profession is a great label for the massage therapy professions. They scope of practice have a wide variety of techniques, no matter the location where these techniques are performed.

PM inquiries:

It doesn’t matter where services are performed, spa, hospital, chiropractic office, massage therapists are licensed the same, obtain the same education. Educating the public is important. Healthcare offices were shut down due to COVID-19 but chiropractic offices were not mandated to shut down. She believes massage therapy is miscategorized with salons and gentleman’s clubs. She hopes the board will list massage therapy as a healthcare service.

This PM member follows a medical model with her massage practice. Continuing education is required, the state has good guidelines. Therapist are all licensed the same. Massage therapy is very therapeutic. Individuals need extra training to be a medical massage therapist. She’s frustrated not knowing when they can re-open. Having to reschedule her clients. Chiles advised to check the DHM and local county health department as each county has specific DHM’s. The PM stated we are healthcare professionals. This shouldn’t happen to us again. This profession needs to be respected.

Allison stated the DHM from 4.30.20 stated Lincoln-Lancaster County can re-open on May 11, 2020.

PM: We need the board to make a strong statement acknowledging Massage Therapy is a healthcare profession.

PM: Are masks supposed to be worn at all times. Some people can’t breathe with masks on. Is this considered a misdemeanor we don’t comply with this rule? Carper – yes, there are so many unknowns. The AMTA has guidelines and “Get Nebraska Growing” has a taskforce working on

best practices to get people back in to the workforce, keeping the therapist and clients safe. AMTANE.org.

Chiles: There is a government established taskforce that has been working on how we provide safe effective re-opening of Nebraska. "Get Nebraska Growing" It is compiled of 'best practices' for the establishments that have been closed. Some are guidelines to follow, some are mandates to abide by. Chiles wanted to thank all those individuals that helped with the taskforce. Carper reviewed the information that was turned into the taskforce for his professional opinion. This information should be available by 5.6.2020 and posted on the Massage Therapy website.

Chiles: We need to get support from each of the board members on their opinion whether massage therapy should be considered a health care profession. If so, how do we educate this to the others. The board needs to have a position statement and then share with DHHS, county health departments and the community.

Helaney/Carstens/Carper/Allison – agrees the massage therapy profession needs to be considered a health care profession. Helaney will start working on a position statement and will forward to all the board members and Chiles for review. A follow up conference call will be scheduled in the future to discuss and finalize the statement details.

PM: Has the board thought about virtual meetings for the hard of hearing so people could read lips. And possibly put a face to a name.

Allison: We could possibly look at doing the June meeting as a virtual meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Allison declared the meeting of the Board of Massage Therapy adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michele Helaney, Secretary
Board of Massage Therapy

Minutes completed by Heidi Weiland, Health Licensing Coordinator