



MTAS

Massage Therapist
Association of Saskatchewan

FAQ for massage therapy students re: practicing whilst a student

The MTAS is a member of the Canadian Massage Therapy Association (CMTA), and we adhere to the positions set forth by this group. The CMTA, through 10 professional Associations, represents the majority (15,000+) of massage therapists across the country and works to maintain and enhance the credibility of the massage therapy profession country wide. We are working towards the federal government formally recognizing massage therapy as a valued contributor to the healthcare landscape across the country.

1. What is the minimum standard of education required by the profession?

It is the position of the CMTA and therefore the MTAS that the profession of massage therapy and specifically the stakeholders including associations, regulators, and schools of massage therapy should endorse and support the completion of a minimum education standard before engaging the public in the delivery of clinically indicated massage therapy. That minimum educational standard includes the completion of and graduation from, at a minimum, a two-year/2,200+ hour massage therapy diploma or equivalent, passing any requisite examination as mandated in a province, and that satisfies the [2016 Inter-jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice](#).

2. May I practice unsupervised?

No. Before beginning any type of unsupervised massage practice, the CMTA believes that a massage therapy student must have graduated successfully with this minimum standard from a legitimate and acceptable massage therapy education institution as determined through accreditation via the *Canadian Massage Therapy Council for Accreditation* or, until such time that this program is running fully across Canada, is

acceptable by the standards set out by the CMTA itself or a CMTA organization in a particular geographic jurisdiction.

3. What is a supervised practicum?

The definition of *supervised* means a consistent application of mentorship, training, and supervision by an experienced, professional massage therapist, throughout the delivery of a treatment and treatment plan. (Massage therapy students who are in a supervised practicum or mentorship receiving hands-on training with professional educators in a student clinic are not included within the above statement.)

4. What about liability insurance?

You cannot purchase liability insurance as a student member with the MTAS, as you are not a qualified RMT. No practitioner should work without the appropriate insurance coverage in place. It is a hard and fast rule that, in order for insurance to respond to a claim, student members in Saskatchewan must be fully supervised while practicing massage therapy. The supervision must be by an RMT who has their diploma. Full supervision means that the supervisor be in the room during the entire massage therapy session

(intake, assessment, treatment plan, informed consent, treatment, and remedial assignment.)

Since the 1-year “relaxation” and Swedish massage course is not recognized in Saskatchewan, the students of those educational institutions must continue to be fully supervised with their supervisor present in the room until such time as they have obtained their diploma.

All student practitioners must report to their association, employers, and clients that they are a student and not a licensed RMT. Failure to do so could bring forward a claim against one or all of the practitioners, their employer, and the association.

5. Where does “relaxation massage” fit in?

A key part of this statement is reconciling what is traditionally referred to by clinicians and non-clinicians as “relaxation massage,” as it is a base argument by some for allowing students to work unsupervised, under the premise that relaxation massage can be performed by anyone. If this “relaxation massage” is performed as a therapeutic intervention that will assist the patient to achieve their desired outcome, it requires the depth of knowledge provided by the minimum standard for massage therapy as described above.

Some massage therapy professionals use the word “relaxation” from a marketing perspective to define more easily to a patient a potential outcome. However, they still manage the treatment from the highest level of massage therapy skill. This “relaxation massage” would still include the components of a professional massage therapy appointment with an appropriate intake, assessment, treatment plan, informed consent, and remedial assignment.

Other stakeholders in the profession define and advertise “relaxation massage” as a non-healthcare massage with little or no training required. If a member of the public is searching for an intervention that does not include the components of a professional massage therapy

appointment, then it is likely more appropriate for them to pursue massage from a non-healthcare provider, or someone not associated with the profession. Massage therapy students are associated with the profession.

6. May I charge for treatments I provide under a supervised practicum?

Since the MTAS disagrees with students working unsupervised, we will not publish a position on this question. The student and supervisor should agree on this issue prior to commencing the placement.

7. May I give a receipt?

It is good business practice to always issue a receipt for any transaction, however receipts for third-party reimbursement should not be issued.

We recommend that a receipt for a treatment provided by a student should include the statement “Student practitioner – receipt not eligible for reimbursement by third-party insurance benefit plans.” The receipt should be issued from the clinic, not in the student’s name.

8. How am I accountable for my conduct as a student?

The individual who decides to become a massage therapist has committed to the professional culture of massage therapy healthcare. Integrity and accountability are fundamental to ensuring trust between the public and healthcare professionals. A professional massage therapist’s integrity forms a foundation for trust and fosters healthy therapeutic relationships that promote healing. Students of massage therapy, from the first day of school, should respect the importance of this foundation and respect the standards of the profession.

9. Why are students not permitted to work unsupervised?

The safety of the patient is paramount. Across Canada we are aware of cases where massage therapy students end up with little or no guidance in a work situation and yet there is an expectation to perform competent, clinically indicated massage therapy. This puts the patient at risk of unintended consequences; the CMTA stands by the belief that without a demonstrated achievement of the minimum standards there is an increased risk to the safety of the patient. Further, these actions put the student's future at risk and can affect the reputation of a business as well.

10. What do third-party benefit providers have to say about massage therapist standards?

Insurance benefit providers and the companies that are their clients should expect that all providers have completed a minimum standard of education and the ability to ensure an entry-to-practice level of competency. All providers should deliver care that is at the practice standard and

health outcome expected by the patients who are using those benefits. Insurers who approve treatments provided by individuals not fully qualified as massage therapy professionals inadvertently expose the public to undue risk and undermine the credibility of their stated intention to provide access to benefits associated with licensed health care professionals.

Students working unsupervised, performing massage of any kind before minimum qualifications are achieved, sends a signal to all stakeholders that the profession is willing to compromise the high standards and ethical considerations we, as a profession, have worked so hard to achieve.

Conclusion

Massage therapy is a health profession, and we share the common belief that we are primarily concerned with putting the patient's interests first by providing clinically indicated services for the express purpose of enhancing and improving the lives and health of our patients. The culture of massage therapy is defined by the professionalism of its practitioners. They cannot be separated.