

Board Certification for Therapeutic  
Massage & Bodywork

# CANDIDATE HANDBOOK



**NCBTMB**  
CHOOSE BOARD CERTIFIED.<sup>SM</sup>

NCBTMB Mission: To define and advance the highest standards  
in the massage therapy and bodywork profession.

**VERSION 17.2**

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## Table of Contents

|   |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|
| 1) Overview of NCBTMB's Board Certification Test    | 3  | 23) Web Site – <a href="http://www.ncbtmb.org">www.ncbtmb.org</a>                           | 13 |
| 2) General Information About the Examination        | 3  | 24) Contacting Staff  | 13 |
| 3) Eligibility Requirements                         | 3  | 25) Does your ID Match your Application   | 14 |
| 4) Applying for the Examinations                    | 5  | 26) You Are Important To Us   | 14 |
| 5) Fees   | 6  | BCETMB Board Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork Content Outline | 15 |
| 6) NCBTMB's Review of Application                   | 6  | Standards of Practice   | 21 |
| 7) Meeting the Criteria for Board Certification     | 6  | Code of Ethics  | 26 |
| 8) Rescheduling Your Exam                           | 7  | Job Task Analysis Explained   | 27 |
| 9) Canceling Your Exam and Eligibility              | 7  | Board Certification Reference List  | 28 |
| 10) Missing Your Exam                               | 7  |   |    |
| 11) Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities | 8  |   |    |
| 12) Test Centers and Dates                          | 8  |   |    |
| 13) Scheduling Your Exam                            | 9  |   |    |
| 14) Preparing For Your Exam                         | 9  |   |    |
| 15) Computer Based Testing                          | 9  |   |    |
| 16) Examination Day                                 | 9  |   |    |
| 17) Results and Score Reports                       | 11 |   |    |
| 18) If You Fail the Exam                            | 12 |   |    |
| 19) Duration of Certification                       | 12 |   |    |
| 20) Records Retention                               | 13 |   |    |
| 21) Recertification Program                         | 13 |   |    |
| 22) Certificants Registry                           | 13 |   |    |

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

**-1-**

## Overview of NCBTMB's Certification Test

The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) is a nationally accredited credentialing organization, formed to set high standards for those who practice therapeutic massage and bodywork. It does this through a nationally recognized certification program that evaluates and attests to the core skills, abilities, knowledge and attributes expected of Board Certified practitioners of therapeutic massage and bodywork.

NCBTMB offers one examination for certification – the Board Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (BCETMB). NCBTMB has included a content outline for the BCETMB within this handbook. The eligibility criteria for Board Certification can be found on pages 3–6 of this handbook. Please review these criteria carefully before submitting your application to test.

Once you have become Board Certified, you will join thousands of other massage & bodywork professionals who are committed to fostering high standards of ethical and professional practice in the delivery of therapeutic massage and bodywork services.

NCBTMB contracts with Pearson VUE, an independent testing company, to administer the Board Certification Examination. Experts at Pearson Vue work closely with NCBTMB to develop the exam that is used to evaluate the knowledge of therapeutic massage and bodywork professionals.

Pearson VUE also scores the exam and sends the results to NCBTMB. The NCBTMB Board of Directors oversees Pearson Vue's activities to assure that all components of the examination process meet national standards.

**-2-**

## General Information about the Examination

As described, NCBTMB offers a Board Certification examination to candidates: The BCETMB - Board Certification for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork exam.

The Board Certification exam is a Certification Examination that candidates can take and pass to show that they have earned a higher voluntary credential within the profession.

### Exam Facts

- The Board Certification exam consists of 160 multiple-choice questions.
- Four choices are provided for each multiple-choice question. Only one choice is the correct answer.
- You will have 2 hours and 40 minutes to complete the certification exam.
- A computer scores the exam as either pass or fail.
- You will receive notification of having either passed or failed the exam as soon as you have completed it.
- The Board Certification exam is only available in English.
- Prepare for the exam with NCB's Online Practice Exam, available at [www.shop.ncbtmb.org](http://www.shop.ncbtmb.org).

**-3-**

## Eligibility Requirements

You may sit for NCBTMB's test once you have graduated from your massage therapy program. You must meet the Board Certification requirements before obtaining the credential.

### Board Certification:

There are two ways that you may be eligible to take the exam. Each method requires that you have specific amounts of training and/or experience as a therapeutic massage and/or bodywork professional. The eligibility methods are 1) Graduating from an Assigned School and using the Assigned School Code, along with submitting transcripts from the school; or, 2) the Completing the Portfolio Review process.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

Applicants who have not completed a program of formal instruction may submit their documentation under the Portfolio Review process.

## Board Certification Criteria

To be considered eligible to receive the BCTMB credential, a candidate must have graduated from an NCBTMB Assigned School and have met the minimal criteria. The program of study must have included:

- 300 hrs. (60%) delivered In-class (face-to-face) lecture in courses that represent knowledge a massage therapist must know to practice safely.
- 200 hrs. (40%) of hands-on instruction delivered in-class (face-to-face) only.

## The program of instruction must include:

- 200 hours of massage and bodywork assessment, theory, and application instruction.
- 125 hours of instruction on the body systems (anatomy, physiology and kinesiology).
- 40 hours of Pathology.
- 10 hours of business and ethics instruction (a minimum of 6 hours in ethics).
- 125 hours of instruction in an area or related field that theoretically completes your massage program of study.
- The additional 250 hours may be completed in other modalities taken from the NCBTMB Assigned School, continuing education from an NCBTMB Approved Provider or courses taken from an accredited college or university.

## Candidates must show proof of:

- Passing the Board Certification Exam for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork.
- 750 hours of education. (If the massage therapy program does not meet the 750-hour requirement, the candidate may submit additional hours from Continuing Education by an NCBTMB Approved Provider or courses taken from an accredited college or university).
- 250 hours of professional, hands-on work experience (25 of these hours may be from volunteer work).
- Submit a copy of your driver's license or legal identification.
- Submit to a criminal background check.
- Sign that you agree to uphold NCB's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

Formal training must be received from a state-licensed/approved/exempt training/education institution. Please ask your school administrator for the required "NCBTMB Assigned School Code." Include your School Code on your application form. Failure to include your school code will delay your application.

You must be able to prove that you have graduated from a formal training program. This proof must be in the form of an original, official school transcript.

Official school transcripts must be sent to NCBTMB directly from the institution at which you received your training. Be sure to include all other documentation with your online application

All education and training courses must have been completed satisfactorily or have a passing grade. If your school did not offer an "Ethics" course, your school will need to explain where in the transcript you received the six clock hours of instruction in ethics. For example, the school might be able to explain that, "six clock hours of ethics were taught in the course called Professional Business Practices."

You must have graduated from the program and complete the additional requirements before you will be awarded the Board Certification credential. For example, if you are enrolled in an 800-hour program, you must complete ALL 800 hours.

The mandatory or voluntary school clinic hours do not count towards professional hands-on work experience. This criterion must be met by working in a professional work environment. The therapist must be licensed or state certified in states that require practitioners to obtain the credential before working legally within the state.

All applicants must be at least 18 years old at the time they sit for the examination.

## Portfolio Review Process

You can apply through the Portfolio Review Process if your program of study was taken in a country other than the United States, or does not meet the requirements listed previously on Page 4. You must have taken courses from other

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

schools or colleges. It is important to note that all students who attend a school outside of the United States MUST apply through the Portfolio Review process.

The Portfolio Review Process allows you to put a portfolio together of all your training. The Portfolio Review team reviews your portfolio to see whether the training you have completed is equivalent to the training you would get in a formal 750-hour program. A different application and additional fee is required. A transcript proving your education is required with your application.

**-4-**

## Applying for the Examination

To apply for the NCBTMB Board Certification exam you must create a user profile on the [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org) website and complete the correct application.

To complete the online application, visit [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org). At the top of the home page, click Register. Complete your personal information and click submit.

- An email will be sent to you with a verification code. Copy the code and paste it into the link provided. This will allow you to create a username and password.
- Login to the NCBTMB home page by clicking “Login” at the top of the page and entering your username and password. Verify your personal information and click the “Verify” button at the bottom of the page.
- Once logged in, click on “Complete a Form” from the left-hand side of your screen and choose the “Board Certification Application.”
- Complete the application, make payment, click “Submit” and make sure to click the confirmation button.
- Upload your transcripts and government ID to the application. You may upload your work experience to the Board Certification Document upload if you haven’t completed your work experience at this time.

Any documentation that you are having difficulties uploading may be mailed to the address below.

Please ensure that your name is on the documentation so NCBTMB employees know which file to upload the documentation.

**NCBTMB  
1333 Burr Ridge Parkway, Suite 200  
Burr Ridge, IL 60527**

Portfolio Review application are also found under “Complete a Form” within your profile.

Board Certification applications require approximately 2 weeks to process. The candidate’s criminal background check must be returned to NCBTMB before the candidate may apply for the test.

Please allow 4 weeks to complete a Portfolio Review application.

Once NCBTMB has processed your application, you will receive an email confirming the application.

It is your (the applicant’s) responsibility to submit all necessary documentation.

**All criteria must be met and submitted before the credential can be awarded.**

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## **-5-** **Fees**

Fees must be paid by credit or debit card.

Each of the fees entitles you to one examination registration, one copy of your results, and, when you pass the Board Certification Exam and meet the requirements, one copy of your certificate.

**Board Certification Examination Fee: \$250**

**Board Certification Examination Fee for Anyone Who Has Previously Taken an NCBTMB Examination: \$225**

**Portfolio Review Fee: \$325**

**Background Check Fee: \$25**

**Processing Fees:**

There is a \$75 processing fee if you cancel your application before the exam date or are deemed ineligible to take the exam.

There is a \$75 processing fee and a \$75 Portfolio Review fee if you have applied through Portfolio Review and cancel your application before the exam date or are deemed ineligible to take the exam.

**Background Check Fee: \$25**

**Non-Sufficient Funds Fee: \$30**

**NOTE:** Fees are always subject to change. It is your responsibility to make sure you have the most current copy of the NCBTMB's Candidate Handbook and that you submit the correct fee.

## **-6-**

### **NCBTMB's Review of Application**

NCBTMB performs a criminal background check on all its candidates. Each candidate must pass the criminal background check before being made eligible to test.

Candidates have 90 days from the time they are deemed eligible to take the exam.

The Authorization to Test Email will state the dates of your eligibility period. This 90-day period starts as soon as you are made eligible.

After you schedule your appointment, you will receive a confirmation email that includes the date, time, location and directions to the test center. Candidates who do not take the exam during this time period will forfeit their exam fee in full. They will also have to reapply and pay the full exam fee to again be considered eligible to take the exam.

All information submitted by an applicant/candidate may be provided to law enforcement agencies and federal, state, county and local regulatory agencies at the discretion of NCBTMB and/or the request of such agencies.

## **-7-**

### **Meeting the Criteria for Board Certification**

All candidates must submit transcripts stating that they have completed a massage therapy program from an NCBTMB Approved School and a valid government ID with the Board Certification application.

If you do not currently meet the Board Certification criteria—meaning that your program of study contained less than 750 hours of education and/or you still need additional time to reach the 250 hours of hands on professional work experience—and test prior to meeting the requirements, you will have two years to submit the additional documentation. The credential will be forfeited if all documentation is not submitted within two years from testing.

If you do not pass the criminal background check, your application is forfeited and no refund will be rewarded.

**NOTE:** There is no refund allowed based on incomplete document submission after the two-year requirement.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

**-8-**

## Rescheduling Your Exam

### Rescheduling an Exam You Have Yet to Take

To reschedule an exam by phone, you must notify the Pearson VUE Registration Call Center at 1-888-699-1808, by 8:00 PM Eastern time at least one business day (business days are Monday through Friday) before your exam is scheduled to take place.

Your rescheduled examination date must still fall within your original three-month (90-day) eligibility period. The full exam fee from your first reservation will be applied to your new exam date. If you do not reschedule within these guidelines, you will forfeit your entire exam fee. If you wish to reapply later, you will be required to submit all applicable fees.

**DO NOT** call NCBTMB to reschedule your appointment with Pearson VUE.

### Rescheduling a Missed Exam Appointment

If you missed your scheduled exam appointment, you will need to complete an Application for Retest and submit an additional fee. Once this is processed you will be reset for a new three-month (90-day) eligibility period.

**-9-**

## Canceling your Exam and Eligibility

### Canceling your Exam Eligibility if you have Already Scheduled an Exam

If you have already registered for an exam, call Pearson Vue's registration call center at 1-888-699-1808 by 8:00 PM Eastern time at least one business day (business days are Monday through Friday) before your exam is scheduled to take place.

**DO NOT** call NCBTMB to cancel your appointment with Pearson VUE.

### Canceling your exam eligibility if you have NOT scheduled an Exam

Call NCBTMB at 1-800-296-0664. Your eligibility to take the exam will be invalidated, and you will have to complete a new application, submit required documentation and pay all applicable fees should you decide to take the exam in the future. After answering a few questions, your eligibility to receive a refund will be determined.

### Canceled Exam Fee Refund

To be considered for a partial refund, you must contact NCBTMB by phone at 800-296-8000, or by email at [info@ncbtmb.org](mailto:info@ncbtmb.org), prior to your eligibility expiration date. Please note that NCBTMB will **NOT** return any documentation submitted.

Once materials are submitted, they become the property of NCBTMB. A refund of your application fee, minus a \$75 processing fee along with a \$25 background check fee, will be sent within four weeks of the written request. Once NCBTMB receives your letter requesting a refund, you will no longer be eligible to take the exam.

If your request to cancel your application is not received by your eligibility expiration date and you do not sit for the examination, you forfeit your entire application and all examination fees. If you decide to take the examination at a later date, you will need to reapply as a new candidate. You will have to resubmit your application and payment and abide by all current policies, requirements and applicable fees.

**-10-**

## Missing Your Exam

### Missing a scheduled exam

If on the day you are scheduled to take the exam you do not appear, and you have not rescheduled or canceled your exam as outlined above, you will forfeit the full exam fee.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

There are five acceptable reasons for missing a scheduled exam:

- Serious illness—either you or an immediate family member (must be documented)
- Death in the immediate family
- Traffic accident in route to the exam site
- Unexpected military duty call-up
- Natural disaster (hurricane, earthquake, flood, etc.) (Note: Not allowable are isolated events including power outages, high winds, icy roads, etc.)

If your reason is accepted, you will be allowed to reschedule your exam, free of charge, one-time only. You will need to call NCBTMB at 1-800-296-0664 and state your reason for missing the exam. This must be done no later than four (4) business days after the missed exam date. NCBTMB reserves the right to request additional evidence to support your reason for missing the exam.

## **-11-**

### **Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities**

NCBTMB and Pearson Vue pledge to comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended (42 USC Section 12101, et. seq.), and with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.), to the best of their ability. If you need special accommodations because of a disabling condition, you may ask for special testing services. This request must be submitted using the “ADA Accommodations” form found under “Complete a Form” within your profile. All requests are handled on an individual basis.

If you are requesting special accommodations, you must submit a letter from an appropriate healthcare professional that is licensed to evaluate the disability. The letter must be written on the healthcare professional’s letterhead and include the professional’s title, address and telephone number and date.

The letter must also include a diagnosis of the disabling condition and explain why special testing accommodations are necessary. The letter must have an original signature from the professional and be dated no more than 5 years prior to application. Faxes and photocopies will not be accepted. Where applicable, copies of diagnostic reports should also be submitted.

Official documentation regarding your disability including the required “ADA Accommodation Request Form” (available on our web site at [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org) - login to your profile and click “Complete a Form”) must be submitted to NCBTMB, at the time you apply. Special accommodations will be provided at no additional charge.

#### **Policy on non-discrimination**

NCBTMB does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, medical condition, or physical disability.

## **-12-**

### **Test Centers and Dates**

NCBTMB contracts with Pearson Vue, the global leader in technology-enabled testing and assessment services, to develop, administer, and deliver the Board Certification exam for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork - BCETMB. Test takers benefit from Pearson Vue’s extensive test delivery network, which is the largest in the world. In addition, the exam will be available five days a week (many locations six days) at one of Pearson Vue’s North American testing centers.

Please do not wait until the last week to schedule your exam as appointment times are limited. Extensions will not be given due to lack of availability at the testing center.

Please note you must have a current/valid Government I.D. and that visitors are not allowed in the test center.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

Childcare is not provided and children are not allowed in the testing center.

Any violation of testing policies and procedures may result in dismissal from the testing center, cancellation of exam scores, and forfeiture of eligibility for certification and exam fees.

Directions and tutorials to testing centers may be found on the Pearson Vue web site at [www.pearsonvue.com](http://www.pearsonvue.com).

**-13-**

## Scheduling your Exam

All eligible candidates will receive an Authorization to Test Email. Candidates can schedule appointments by logging into their profiles, clicking “Schedule Exam,” or by calling Pearson Vue directly at 1-888- 699-1808. If your eligibility includes special ADA accommodations, YOU MUST schedule your exam through the Pearson Vue special accommodations group at 1-800-466-0450.

Be sure you plan your exam date well in advance. You should also pick alternate dates and times, just in case your first choice is not available. Exam appointments are subject to change if the test center is closed for some reason.

**-14-**

## Preparing for Your Exam: NCBTMB Study Guide

NCBTMB’s Online Practice Exam is available for purchase online at [shop.ncbtmb.org](http://shop.ncbtmb.org), the NCBTMB Resource Center.

**-15-**

## Computer Based Testing

You will take your examination using Computer Based Testing (CBT) technology. You do not need extensive computer experience to take the examination. At the beginning of your

examination, a tutorial will be provided on how to take the test. You will be instructed on how to provide responses to the items that appear on the examination. Once you begin your test, you will not be able to go back to the tutorial section.

**DO NOT** click End EXAM until you have completed the exam and all reviews.

When “End EXAM” is selected, the examination will end and you will not be able to review or change any answers. Staff at the testing center will only be able to answer questions that you might have about CBT—they have no knowledge about the exam content. Your exam will be scored as soon as you are finished. You will receive a diagnostic score report at the testing center following the completion of your exam. This is not an official score report.

**-16-**

## Examination Day

### A. Arrival time

You must arrive at the Test Center 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment to complete the admission process required before testing begins.

### B. What you need to Bring on Exam Day

Testing centers utilize biometric procedures for validating candidate identification. The candidate’s government issued photo ID will be scanned, the candidate will be photographed, and other security procedures will be enacted.

The candidate must present at least one form of identification, which must include a current, valid (not expired) government issued picture ID and your signature. This could include:

- Driver’s License
- Passport
- Military ID Card
- State ID Card

The primary form of identification listed above MUST be issued by the national government in the country where you are testing. If your government issued identification is from a country other than the country in which you are testing, you must present your passport for identification. The passport must be current (not expired).

It is important to note that a Social Security card **IS NOT** an acceptable form of identification.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

You do not need to bring your Confirmation Letter to the testing site. Please note that visitors are not allowed in the test center. Childcare is NOT provided and children are not allowed in the testing center.

## C. Late Arrival

Candidates who arrive late for their exam will lose their reservation. They will be considered absent. Candidates must arrive at the Test Center 30 minutes before their scheduled appointment to complete the admission process required before testing begins.

## D. Inclement Weather

If severe weather or a natural disaster makes the testing center inaccessible or unsafe, the exam will be canceled. Exams that are cancelled due to bad weather, will be rescheduled as soon as possible, without additional charge. Candidates should contact Pearson Vue to determine if the center is closed and for rescheduling information.

## E. Exam Security

When you arrive at the testing center, you will be asked to sign in on a test center log, copy and sign the Pearson VUE Candidate Rules Agreement (see next page), present your identification, and submit biometric samples (such as fingerprint or palm scan). Failure to comply with any of these requirements may result in your dismissal from the testing center and/or forfeiture of eligibility to test.

No materials, notes, papers and/or electronic devices of any kind, other than a visual aid pre-approved in writing by NCBTMB pursuant to the ADA Accommodation Request Form, are permitted in the examination room or center.

The performance of all candidates is monitored and will be analyzed to detect fraud. No candidate is permitted to give or receive assistance from others during the testing period. In the event that a test proctor observes or is notified that an applicant is behaving unethically during the exam (including such time an applicant is outside the examination room), such applicant's examination results shall be withheld pending further review. Examples of unethical conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Unauthorized possession, receipt or disclosure

of materials relating to the examination during or after the examination testing period;

- Use of a cell phone or other communication device during the examination testing period;
- Other evidence indicating the security of the examination has been breached;
- Any other assistance that would provide the recipient of such information with an advantage while taking the current or future examination.

Any individual suspected of such a violation will be subject to NCBTMB disciplinary and/or legal action.

Additionally, no test materials, notes, documents or memoranda of any kind are to be taken from the examination room. Any individual who removes or attempts to remove exam materials will be subject to NCBTMB disciplinary and/or legal action.

Candidates in violation of any NCBTMB testing policy are subject to forfeiture of examination fee, cancellation of exam scores, forfeiture of eligibility to test and disciplinary and/or legal action. Sanctions could result in the removal or denial of certification.

All exam materials, including all questions and all forms of the exam, are copyrighted and the property of NCBTMB. Any distribution of these materials through reproduction, or oral or written communication, is strictly prohibited and punishable by law.

## Pearson Vue Candidate Rules Agreement

- I will bring current/valid Government I.D.
- I will not take the following types of personal items into the testing room: cellular phones, hand-held computers/personal digital assistants (PDAs) or other electronic devices, pagers, watches, wallets, purses, hats, bags, coats, books and notes. Studying is not allowed in the test center.
- I will store these items in a secure area indicated by the administrator. Cellular phones, pagers, and other electronic devices must be turned off prior to placing them in the designated secure area. The testing center is not responsible for lost, stolen or misplaced personal items.
- If I am given an erasable note board or exam-

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

- specific materials, I will not use them until after the exam has started. I will not remove these items from the testing room at any time during the exam, and I will return them to the administrator immediately after the exam.
- The administrator will log me in to my assigned workstation, verify that I am taking the intended exam and start the exam. I will sit in my assigned seat until escorted out by a Test Administrator. I understand that eating, drinking, smoking, chewing gum and making noise that creates a disturbance for other candidates are prohibited during the exam.
- The administrator will monitor me continuously while I take my exam. The session may be videotaped or otherwise recorded for security or other purposes.
- If I experience problems that affect my ability to take the exam, I will notify the administrator immediately.
- The administrator cannot answer questions related to exam content. If I have questions of this nature, I will contact the exam sponsor after I leave the testing center.
- Break policies are established by the exam sponsor. Some exams may include scheduled breaks, and instructions will appear on the computer screen at the appropriate time; whether or not the exam timer stops depends on the sponsor's policy.
- If I take an unscheduled break at any other time, the exam timer will not be stopped. The administrator will set my workstation to the break mode, and I will take my ID with me when I leave the room. The administrator will check my ID before I return to my seat and will then restart my exam.
- While I am taking a scheduled break, I am permitted to access personal items that I stored during the exam. While I am taking an unscheduled break, I am NOT allowed access to personal items other than medication required at a specific time and with the approval of the test administrator. Items not permitted include but are not limited to: cellular phones, exam notes and study guides, unless specifically permitted by the exam sponsor.
- I will not try to remove copies of exam questions and answers from the testing center, and I will not share or discuss the questions or answers seen in my exam with other candidates.
- After the exam ends, the administrator will come to my workstation and ensure my exam has ended properly. The exam sponsors may display my score on the screen after the exam or may provide a printed score report. If a printed score report is provided, I will receive it after returning the erasable note board and other materials to the administrator.
- Your Privacy—Your exam results will be encrypted and transmitted to Pearson Vue and to the exam sponsor. The testing center does not keep any information other than when and where your exam was taken.
- The Pearson Vue Privacy Policy Statement provides additional information regarding this; you can obtain this by visiting the Pearson VUE Web site ([www.pearsonvue.com](http://www.pearsonvue.com)) or by contacting a Pearson Vue Call Center.

**-17-**

## Results and Score Reports

Once you have finished taking the exam, the computer will score your performance on the test. The diagnostic score report will be issued to you after you have completed the test. Your performance will be communicated as either 'pass' or 'fail'.

A candidate's performance on Examinations shall remain confidential unless otherwise stipulated by the examinee.

If you wish to obtain an official score report you will need to log in to your account and complete the "Score Report" form found under "Complete a Form." There is a \$20.00 fee per score report.

If you fail the exam, you will be given diagnostic information about your overall performance. The information will identify areas of weakness, should you wish to try again. The diagnostic score report will also provide information on how to apply for a future exam.

Unlike cases of individual candidate misconduct, occasionally testing irregularities occur that affect a group of test takers. Such problems include, but are not limited to, administrative errors, defective

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

equipment or materials, improper access to test content and/or the unauthorized general availability of test content, as well as other disruptions of test administrations (e.g. natural disasters and other emergencies). In such cases an incident report must be filled out before leaving the Pearson VUE test facility.

When group-testing irregularities occur, Pearson VUE will conduct an investigation to provide information to NCBTMB. Based on this information, NCBTMB may direct Pearson VUE either not to score the test or to cancel the test score. When it is appropriate to do so, NCBTMB will arrange with Pearson VUE to give affected test takers the opportunity to take the test again as soon as possible, without charge. Affected test takers will be notified of the reasons for the cancellation and their options for retaking the test. NCBTMB's appeals process does not apply to group testing irregularities.

**-18-**

## If You Fail the Exam

If you fail the Board Certification Examination you may retake it after 45 days from the time you took the original test. You may only take the Board Certification two times within a six-month period.

### NCBTMB's Policy on Challenging Results

If you need to challenge the exam results based on the content of the exam you should contact NCBTMB directly at 1-800-296-0664.

An applicant shall have thirty (30) days to file a written request for an appeal following receipt of such notice that they were unsuccessful in their attempt on any NCBTMB examination.

If the appeal is based on examination content, such request shall be sent to the Chief Executive Officer by certified mail, overnight express mail, or such other delivery method containing written verification of its delivery. The Chief Executive Officer shall notify the NCBTMB Examination Development Committee about the written request for an appeal.

If the appeal is based on scoring of an examination, such request shall be sent to the NCBTMB testing vendor by certified mail, overnight express mail, or such other delivery method containing written

verification of its delivery. The testing vendor will notify the applicant of their final determination. The testing vendor's determination is final and no further appeals are allowed.

### 3/5 Failure Policy for The Board Certification Test

Candidates who do not achieve a passing score after three (3) attempts:

- Must submit \$250 reexamination fee and proof of completing 100 hours of additional education before they can test again. NCBTMB recommends that education is in the core curriculum and/or areas of weakness.
- Will then be allowed two (2) additional attempts to successfully pass the examination.

If the candidate fails the examination five (5) times, the candidate will be required to submit:

- \$250 reexamination fee.
- Proof of completing 500 hours of additional education before they can test again. NCBTMB recommends that education is in the core curriculum and/ or areas of weakness. Proof of additional education may be demonstrated by the submission of:
  - An additional transcript from a school, or
  - Certificates of completion demonstrating that the required hours were taken.

A candidate can only take the Board Certification exam a total of 8 times.

The Board Certification exam can only be taken twice within a 6 month period. Candidates must wait a period of 45 days between tests.

**-19-**

## Duration of Certification

Your Board Certification in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork certification will remain current for a period of two (2) years from the date you become Board Certified. During that time, use the designation of "BCTMB" (Board Certified in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork) after your name to identify yourself as being Board Certified. You will receive a certificate that you can frame.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

**-20-**

## Records Retention

Records of candidates who test under the policies and procedures in this handbook will have

their records retained for 8 years. These documents shall remain confidential and be deleted after the eight-year cycle is complete. NCBTMB will maintain electronic records of all applicants and certificants, subject to the retention policy. Test scores (passing and failing) are maintained indefinitely for all candidates in a secure electronic format.

All applications for recertification, and their supporting documentation, are maintained by NCBTMB for a period of four years (two recertification cycles). Inactive records (i.e. certificants whose certification period has expired) that remain idle for a period of three years shall be purged from NCBTMB's archive of records.

**-21-**

## Recertification Program

You must recertify every two years to maintain your certification status. Recertification is a process whereby the Board Certified practitioner demonstrates ongoing efforts to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform in a professional and ethical manner. Recertification also helps assure the public that the Board Certified practitioner remains committed to adhering to the NCBTMB Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. You may begin earning credits toward recertification the day after you pass the exam.

You can review the current recertification requirements from our web site at [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org) to learn more about this process and to prepare for your continued education. If you have any additional questions about recertification, please call 1-800-296-0664.

**-22-**

## Certificants Registry

NCBTMB releases the names and business telephone numbers of Board Certified practitioners

upon request, for consumers and professional opportunities. Please mark the appropriate box on your application or call NCBTMB if you do not want your name to be released.

Additionally, NCBTMB offers a practitioner locator service on its web site. This service allows consumers the opportunity to locate Board Certified therapists by name, city, or zip code. You will be included in the Practitioner Locator Program unless you state that you don't want to be included.

**-23-**

## Website - [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org)

The NCBTMB web site is a valuable tool for everyone! It can answer most questions you have about the examinations. NCBTMB encourages you to visit the website for answers to general questions and to view current and past issues of NCBTMB blog and webinars, along with other information.

**-24-**

## Contacting Staff

NCBTMB staff can be reached Monday – Friday between 8:00am and 5:00pm Central Time at 1-800-296-0664. The calls are taken in the order received. Information can be readily obtained through the NCBTMB website [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org). You may also send us an e-mail at [info@ncbtmb.org](mailto:info@ncbtmb.org) or write us at:

**NCBTMB**  
**1333 Burr Ridge Parkway, Suite 200**  
**Burr Ridge, IL 60527**

## Moving?

NCBTMB makes every effort to keep the most current mailing and email addresses of its certificants. However, we need your help to do so. If you move, change your name or change your mailing or email address please contact NCBTMB as soon as possible. Please call NCBTMB at 1-800-296-0664 or go online at [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org) to update your Certificant profile with address changes.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

**-25-**

## **Stop: Does your ID Match your Application Name?**

NCBTMB and our test vendor, Pearson Vue, will not allow identification (ID) discrepancies. Please make sure that your photo ID and the name on the NCBTMB application do not result in any of the following discrepancies.

- Substitute for either the first or last name are not permitted
  - “Smith” to “Jones”
  - “Mary” to “Margaret”
- Incorrect letters on any documentation
  - “Diller” vs. “Ditter”
- Maiden name as a middle name on one document, while given middle name is used on another document
  - “Mary Elizabeth Smith” vs.  
“Mary Jones Smith”

Legal name changes must be approved by NCBTMB prior to scheduling an appointment. Name discrepancies are one of the most common reasons why applicants are not allowed to test. If you encounter one of the ID/name discrepancies above or if the name on your application does not match your current/valid Government I.D. the Pearson VUE testing center has been instructed to not allow you to test. You will forfeit your exam and all associated fees. Please contact NCBTMB to discuss how to resolve these ID/name discrepancies if this relates to you.

**-26-**

## **You Are Important To Us!**

Update your personal information online or call if:

- Your school filled out your application with their contact information.
- You have moved.
- You have changed your email address.
- Your phone number has changed.
- You have a name change

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## Board Certification for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (BCETM) Content Outline

### I. Communication (10 - 12%)

- A. Conduct an effective and thorough intake interview to gather information from the client.

#### Knowledge

1. Functional assessment of lifestyle (activities, occupation, etc...)
2. Pathology and contraindications
3. Scope of practice
4. General anatomy and physiology Anatomical position and terminology (e.g., planes; directions)

#### Skills

1. Customer service skills
2. Professional skills
3. Communication skills

- B. Discuss assessment and treatment plan with the client.

#### Knowledge

1. Treatment plan and documentation
2. Time management skills

#### Skills

1. Communication skills

- C. Teach others about the benefits of massage therapy.

#### Knowledge

1. General massage therapy theory, methods and techniques
2. Marketing
3. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)
4. Scope of practice
5. General anatomy and physiology
6. Research literacy (how to read a research study)

#### Skills

1. Professional skills
2. Business skills
3. Communication skills

- D. Collaborate with other healthcare professionals about the course of care for client.

#### Knowledge

1. General anatomy and physiology
2. Principles of confidentiality
3. Treatment plan and documentation

#### Skills

1. Professional skills
2. Communication skills

- E. Communicate findings from client assessment and massage session/treatment with other healthcare professionals.

#### Knowledge

1. Principles of confidentiality
2. Scope of practice
3. General massage therapy theory, methods and techniques

#### Skills

1. Professional skills
2. Communication skills

### II. Law and Ethics (8 - 10%)

- A. Maintain proper physical and emotional boundaries by using appropriate touch skills.

#### Knowledge

1. Quality of touch
2. Client centered massage therapy
3. Therapeutic relationships (e.g., boundaries, transference and counter-transference, etc...)
4. General Law and Ethics

#### Skills

1. Professional skills

- B. Maintain client confidentiality.

#### Knowledge

1. Principles of confidentiality
2. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
3. Record keeping practices
4. General Law and Ethics

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## **Skills**

1. Business skills
2. Professional skills
3. Customer service skills

C. Perform only within your legal scope of practice.

## **Knowledge**

1. General Law and ethics
2. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills

D. Provide only services that you are qualified to perform.

## **Knowledge**

1. Scope of practice
2. General Law and Ethics
3. Modalities literacy (familiarity with other modalities)

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills

E. Drape clients appropriately to protect their privacy.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. Professional skills

## **Skills**

1. Customer service skills

F. Respect the client's right to say no to any service at any time.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. Client centered massage therapy

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills
2. Customer service skills

G. Refrain from participating in a sexual relationship or sexual misconduct with clients, whether consensual or otherwise.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. General Law and Ethics
3. Scope of practice

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills

H. Represent educational and professional qualifications honestly.

## **Knowledge**

1. Scope of practice
2. General Law and Ethics
3. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills

I. Obtain informed consent from the client.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. General Law and Ethics
3. Treatment plan and documentation

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills
2. Communication skills

J. Recognize and limit the impact of transference and counter-transference between the client and the practitioner.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. Therapeutic relationships (e.g., boundaries, transference and counter-transference, etc...)

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills

K. Avoid dual and/or multi-dimensional relationships that could impair professional judgment or result in exploitation of the client, employees and or co-workers.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

of practice

2. Therapeutic relationships (boundaries, transference and counter-transference, etc...)
3. General Law and Ethics

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills
- L. Recognize and limit conflicts of interest with clients.

## **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. Therapeutic relationships (boundaries, transference and counter-transference, etc...)

## **Skills**

1. Professional Skills
- M. Report unlicensed massage activity.

## **Knowledge**

1. General Law and Ethics
2. State and local credentialing requirements
3. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
4. Modality literacy (familiarity with other

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills

## **III. Evaluation, Planning and Documentation (34 - 37%)**

- A. Utilize palpatory skills to assess soft tissue.

## **Knowledge**

1. Quality of touch
2. Muscles and muscle groups
3. Bones and bony landmarks
4. Soft tissues injury/pathology
5. General muscle physiology
6. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)
7. Fascia
8. All body systems and their functions
9. Kinesiology

## **Skills**

1. Palpation skills
- B. Perform and interpret active and passive range of motion assessments.

## **Knowledge**

1. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)
2. Muscles and muscle groups
3. Bones and bony landmarks
4. Kinesiology

## **Skills**

1. Palpation skills
  2. Critical thinking skills
- C. Perform functional assessment of the client's lifestyle (activities, occupation, etc...).

## **Knowledge**

1. Body mechanics
2. Self-care

## **Skills**

1. Documentation skills
- D. Perform and interpret postural analysis. Knowledge.

1. Muscles and muscle groups
2. Postural analysis
3. Soft tissue injury/pathology
4. Bones and bony landmarks

## **Skills**

1. Critical thinking skills
  2. Palpation skills
- E. Perform and interpret gait assessment.

## **Knowledge**

1. Gait assessment
2. Muscles and muscle groups
3. Soft tissue injury/pathology
4. Kinesiology
5. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)

## **Skills**

1. Critical thinking skills
2. Palpation skills

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## F. Perform and interpret manual resistance tests.

### **Knowledge**

1. Manual resistive test
2. Postural analysis
3. Soft tissue injury/pathology
4. Muscles and muscle groups
5. Kinesiology
6. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)

### **Skills**

1. Critical thinking skills
2. Palpation skills

## G. Perform and interpret special orthopedic tests.

### **Knowledge**

1. Special orthopedic tests (drawer, empty can, etc...)
2. Muscles and muscle groups
3. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)
4. Bones and bony landmarks
5. Kinesiology

### **Skills**

1. Critical thinking skills
2. Palpation skills

## H. Interpret client health history form.

### **Knowledge**

1. Pathology and contraindications
2. Soft tissue injury/pathology
3. General anatomy and physiology
4. General muscle physiology
5. All body systems and their functions
6. Functional assessment of lifestyle (activities, occupation, etc...)

### **Skills**

1. Critical thinking skills

## I. Document the results of the intake interview.

### **Knowledge**

1. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
2. Record keeping practices
3. Treatment plan and documentation
4. Business skills

### **Skills**

1. Documentation skills
2. Communication skills
3. Professional skills

## J. Create a treatment plan.

### **Knowledge**

1. Treatment plan and documentation
2. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
3. Client centered massage therapy
4. General massage therapy theory, methods and techniques
5. Pathology and contraindications
6. Soft tissue injury/pathology
7. General anatomy and physiology
8. Functional assessment of lifestyle (activities, occupation, etc...)
9. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)
10. Postural analysis
11. Scope of practices

### **Skills**

1. Documentation skills
2. Communication skills
3. Time management skills
4. Professional skills
5. Business skills
6. Critical thinking skills

## IV. **Massage and Bodywork Techniques and Applications (43 - 46%)**

- A. Determine applicable massage and bodywork technique(s) for client and refer as necessary to other healthcare professionals.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## **Knowledge**

1. Client referral
2. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)
3. Research literacy (how to read a research study)
4. Scope of practice
5. Professional codes of ethics and standards of practice
6. General massage therapy theory, methods and techniques
7. General anatomy and physiology
8. General muscle physiology
9. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)
10. Fascia
11. All body systems and their functions
12. Stretching
13. Kinesiology
14. Functional assessment of lifestyle (activities, occupation, etc...)

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills
  2. Customer service skills
  3. Communications skills
  4. Palpation skills
  5. Critical thinking skills
- B. Apply massage and bodywork techniques appropriately.

## **Knowledge**

1. Endangerment/cautionary sites
2. Quality of touch
3. Body mechanics
4. Muscles and muscle groups
5. General massage therapy theory, methods and techniques
6. Soft tissue injury/pathology
7. Soft tissue manipulation
8. Bones and bony landmarks
9. Therapeutic relationships (e.g., boundaries, transference and counter-transference, etc...)

10. General muscle physiology
11. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)
12. Fascia
13. All body systems and their functions
14. Stretching
15. Kinesiology
16. Anatomical position and terminology (e.g., planes, directions)

## **Skills**

1. Palpation skills
  2. Time management skills
  3. Critical thinking skills
  4. Professional skills
- B. Perform massage/bodywork on special populations (e.g., athletes, geriatric patients, prenatal/postnatal populations).

## **Knowledge**

1. Endangerment/cautionary sites
2. Pathology and contraindications
3. Client centered massage therapy
4. Quality of touch
5. Body mechanics
6. Muscles and muscle groups
7. General massage therapy theory, methods and techniques
8. Soft tissue injury/pathology
9. Soft tissue manipulation
10. Bones and bony landmarks
11. Therapeutic relationships (boundaries, transference and counter-transference, etc...)
12. General anatomy and physiology
13. General muscle physiology
14. Joints (includes ligaments, joint capsules, bursae, etc...)
15. Fascia
16. All body systems and their functions
17. Stretching
18. Kinesiology

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

19. Anatomical position and terminology  
(e.g., planes, directions)
20. Functional assessment of lifestyle  
(activities, occupation, etc...)

## **Skills**

1. Palpation skills
  2. Time management skills
  3. Critical thinking skills
  4. Professional skills
  5. Communication skills
- D. Identify contraindications and apply appropriate techniques.

## **Knowledge**

1. Pathology and contraindications
2. Soft tissue injury/pathology
3. Endangerment/cautionary sites
4. General anatomy and physiology
5. Musculoskeletal system
6. All body systems and their functions
7. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)
8. Kinesiology

## **Skills**

1. Palpation skills
  2. Critical thinking skills
  3. Communication skills
  4. Professional skills
- E. Identify fundamental attributes of bodywork modalities.

## **Knowledge**

1. Modality literacy (familiarity with other modalities)
2. Scope of practice
3. Research literacy (how to read a research study)

## **Skills**

1. Professional skills
2. Critical thinking skills

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## NCBTMB STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

### **Background**

The purpose of the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork, Inc. (NCBTMB) is to foster high standards of ethical and professional practice in the delivery of services through a recognized credible certification program that assures the competency of practitioners of therapeutic massage and bodywork.

These Standards of Practice ensure that Certificants are aware of, and committed to, upholding high standards of practice for the profession. Also, the Standards of Practice are meant to assist members of the general public, including consumers, other health care professionals, and state and municipal regulatory agencies or boards with understanding the duties and responsibilities of NCBTMB Certificants.

NCBTMB developed and adopted these Standards of Practice to provide Certificants with a clear statement of the expectations of professional conduct and level of practice afforded the public in, among other things, the following areas: Professionalism, Legal and Ethical Requirements, Confidentiality, Business Practices, Roles and Boundaries, and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Inappropriate Touch. These Standards of Practice were approved and ratified by the NCBTMB Board of Directors, representatives of the Certificant population and key stakeholders of the NCBTMB.

### **Preamble**

These Standards of Practice for the profession of therapeutic massage and bodywork are the guiding principles by which Certificants conduct their professional practice. These principles help to assure that all professional behaviors are conducted in an ethical, compassionate, and responsible manner. Through these Standards of Practice, NCBTMB seeks to establish and uphold high standards, traditions, and principles of the practices that constitute the profession of therapeutic massage and bodywork. These Standards of Practice are enforceable guidelines for professional conduct, and therefore, are stated in observable and measurable terms intended as minimum levels of practice to which Certificants are held accountable. Upon submission of the application for the Board Certification Examination, each applicant for certification must agree to uphold and abide by the NCBTMB Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice and applicable policies. Those Certificants who fail to comply with the Code of Ethics and these Standards of Practice shall be deemed to have engaged in professional misconduct which may result in sanctions, or other appropriate disciplinary actions, including the suspension or revocation of certification.

NCBTMB Certificants are obligated to report unethical behavior and violations of the Code of Ethics and these Standards of Practice they reasonably and in good faith believe have been performed by other NCBTMB Certificants.

These Standards of Practice reflect NCBTMB's clear commitment that Certificants provide an optimal level of service and strive for excellence in their professional practice. This includes remaining in good standing with NCBTMB, committing to continued personal and professional growth through continuing education, and understanding and accepting that personal and professional actions reflect on the integrity of the therapeutic massage and bodywork profession and NCBTMB. Certificants are responsible for showing and maintaining professional compliance with these Standards of Practice.

NCBTMB requires Certificants to conduct themselves in a highly professional and dignified manner. NCBTMB will not consider and/or adjudicate complaints against Certificants that are based solely on consumer related issues or are based on competitive marketplace issues.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

As the therapeutic massage and bodywork profession evolves, so, too, will these Standards of Practice. These Standards of Practice are, therefore, a live and dynamic document and subject to revision in keeping with the changing demands and expectations of the therapeutic massage and bodywork profession.

## **I. Professionalism**

The Certificant must provide optimal levels of professional therapeutic massage and bodywork services and demonstrate excellence in practice by promoting healing and well-being through responsible, compassionate and respectful touch. In his/her professional role, the Certificant shall:

Standard I(a): adhere to the NCBTMB Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and Policies and Procedures;

Standard I(b): comply with the peer review process conducted by the NCBTMB Ethics and Standards Committee regarding any alleged violations of the NCBTMB Code of Ethics and these Standards of Practice;

Standard I(c): treat each client with respect, dignity and worth;

Standard I(d): use professional verbal, nonverbal and written communications;

Standard I(e): provide an environment that is safe and comfortable for the client and which, at a minimum, meets all legal requirements for health and safety;

Standard I(f): use standard precautions to insure professional hygienic practices and maintain a level of personal hygiene appropriate for practitioners in the therapeutic setting;

Standard I(g): wear clothing that is clean, modest, and professional;

Standard I(h): obtain voluntary and informed consent from the client prior to initiating the session;

Standard I(i): if applicable, conduct an accurate needs assessment, develop a plan of care with the client, and update the plan as needed;

Standard I(j): use appropriate draping to protect the client's physical and emotional privacy;

Standard I(k): be knowledgeable of his/her scope of practice and practice only within these limitations;

Standard I(l): refer to other professionals when in the best interest of the client and practitioner;

Standard I(m): seek other professional advice when needed;

Standard I (n): respect the traditions and practices of other professionals and foster collegial relationships;

Standard I(o): not falsely impugn the reputation of any colleague;

Standard I(p): use the initials BCTMB only to designate his/her professional ability and competency to practice therapeutic massage and bodywork;

Standard I(q): remain in good standing with NCBTMB;

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

Standard I(r): understand that the NCBTMB certificate may be displayed prominently in the Certificant's principal place of practice;

Standard I(s): use the NCBTMB logo and certification number on business cards, brochures, advertisements, and stationery only in a manner that is within established NCBTMB guidelines;

Standard I(t): not duplicate the NCBTMB certificate for purposes other than verification of the practitioner's credentials;

Standard I(u): immediately return the certificate to NCBTMB if certification is revoked; and

Standard I(v): inform NCBTMB of any changes or additions to information included in his/her application for NCBTMB certification or renewal within sixty (60) days of such changes or additions.

## II. Legal and Ethical Requirements

The Certificant must comply with all the legal requirements in applicable jurisdictions regulating the profession of therapeutic massage and bodywork. In his/her professional role, the Certificant shall:

Standard II(a): obey all local, state, and federal laws;

Standard II(b): refrain from any behavior that results in illegal, discriminatory, or unethical actions;

Standard II(c): accept responsibility for his/her own actions;

Standard II(d): report to the proper massage therapy regulatory body within thirty (30) days of discovery of, any evidence, such as first-hand knowledge, indicating any unethical, incompetent or illegal act committed by other Certificants;

Standard II(e): maintain accurate and truthful records;

Standard II(f): report to NCBTMB, within thirty (30) days of discovery of, any evidence, such as first-hand knowledge, of violations of the NCBTMB Code of Ethics and these Standards of Practice by himself/herself or by other Certificants;

Standard II(g): report to NCBTMB, within thirty (30) days of discovery of, any criminal conviction of, or plea of guilty, nolo contendere, or no contest to, a crime in any jurisdiction (other than a minor traffic offense) by himself/herself or by other Certificants;

Standard II(h): report to NCBTMB, within thirty (30) days of discovery of, any pending civil litigation and the resulting resolution related to the professional practice of the Certificant and the professional practice of other Certificants;

Standard II(i): report to NCBTMB, within thirty (30) days of discovery of, any pending complaints in any state or local government or quasi-government board or agency against his/her professional conduct or competence, or that of another Certificant, and the resulting resolution of such complaint; and

Standard II(j): respect existing publishing rights and obey copyright and trademark laws, including, but not limited to, those that apply to NCBTMB's copyright-protected examination.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## III. Confidentiality

The Certificant shall respect the confidentiality of client information and safeguard all records. In his/her professional role, the Certificant shall:

Standard III(a): protect the confidentiality of the client's identity and information in all conversations, advertisements, and any and all other matters unless disclosure of identifiable information is requested by the client in writing, is medically necessary, or is required by law;

Standard III(b): protect the interests of clients who are minors or clients who are unable to give voluntary and informed consent by obtaining prior written permission from a legal guardian;

Standard III(c): solicit only information that is relevant to the professional client/therapist relationship;

Standard III(d): securely retain client files for a minimum period of four (4) years from the termination of the therapeutic relationship; and

Standard III(e): dispose of client files in a secure manner.

## IV. Business Practices

The Certificant shall practice with honesty, integrity, and lawfulness in the business of therapeutic massage and bodywork. In his/her professional role the Certificant shall:

Standard IV(a): provide a physical setting that is safe and meets all applicable legal requirements for health and safety;

Standard IV(b): maintain adequate and customary liability insurance;

Standard IV(c): maintain adequate progress notes for each client session, if applicable;

Standard IV(d): accurately and truthfully inform the public of services provided;

Standard IV(e): honestly represent all professional qualifications and affiliations;

Standard IV(f): promote his/her business with integrity and avoid potential and actual conflicts of interest;

Standard IV(g): advertise in a manner that is honest, dignified, accurate and representative of services provided and remains consistent with the NCBTMB Code of Ethics and these Standards of Practice;

Standard IV(h): advertise in a manner that is not misleading to the public and shall never use sensational, sexual or provocative language and/or pictures to promote his/her business;

Standard IV(i): comply with all laws regarding sexual harassment;

Standard IV(j): not exploit the trust and dependency of others, including clients and employees/co-workers;

Standard IV(k): disclose a schedule of fees in advance of the session;

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

Standard IV(l): make financial arrangements in advance which are clearly understood by, and safeguard the best interests of, the client or consumer;

Standard IV(m): follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles;

Standard IV(n): file all applicable municipal, state and federal taxes; and

Standard IV(o): maintain accurate financial records, contracts and legal obligations, appointment records, tax reports and receipts for the most recent three (3) fiscal years.

## **V. Roles and Boundaries**

The Certificant shall adhere to ethical boundaries and perform the professional roles designed to protect both the client and the practitioner, and safeguard the therapeutic value of the relationship. In his/her professional role, the Certificant shall:

Standard V(a): recognize his/her personal limitations and practice only within these limitations;

Standard V(b): recognize his/her influential position with the client and not exploit the relationship for personal or other gain;

Standard V(c): recognize and limit the impact of transference and counter-transference between the client and the Certificant;

Standard V(d): avoid dual or multidimensional relationships that could impair professional judgment or result in exploitation of a client, student, employee, supervisee, mentee, trainee, or anyone else with whom a power differential exists;

Standard V(e): acknowledge and respect the client's freedom of choice in the therapeutic session;

Standard V(f): respect the client's right to refuse the therapeutic session or any part of the therapeutic session;

Standard V(g): refrain from practicing under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substances (with the exception of a prescribed dosage of prescription medication which does not impair the Certificant);

Standard V(h): have the right to refuse and/or terminate the service to a client who is abusive or under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substance; and

Standard V(i): have the right to refuse and/or terminate the service to a client who exhibits language or behavior which the therapist deems as an immediate or potential risk to the safety of the: (i) client; (ii) Certificant; or (iii) therapeutic relationship.

## **VI. Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Inappropriate Touch**

The Certificant shall refrain from any behavior that sexualizes, or appears to sexualize, the client/therapist relationship. The Certificant recognizes the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship may activate practitioner and/or client needs and/or desires that weaken boundaries which may lead to sexualizing the therapeutic relationship. In his/her professional role, the Certificant shall:

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

Standard VI(a): refrain from participating in a sexual relationship or sexual conduct with the client, whether consensual or otherwise, from the beginning of the client/therapist relationship and for a minimum of six (6) months after the termination of the client/therapist relationship, unless an ongoing current sexual relationship existed prior to the date the therapeutic relationship began. In the case of a pre-existing ongoing sexual relationship, providing therapeutic massage and bodywork on such a person is discouraged, but may be done with informed consent which acknowledges the power differential in a therapeutic relationship and the complexities of dual relationships;

Standard VI(b): in the event the client initiates sexual behavior, interrupt therapy to clarify the purpose of the therapeutic session. Provided that the client's initial sexual behavior ceases, the Certificant may, at his or her discretion, take action to terminate or continue the session. The Certificant shall terminate the session if the sexual conduct continues;

Standard VI(c): with the exception of a pre-existing ongoing sexual relationship, as set forth in Standard VI(a), recognize that sexual activity with clients, students, employees, supervisees, mentees, trainees, or anyone else with whom a power differential exists, is prohibited even if consensual;

Standard VI(d): not touch the genitalia;

Standard VI(e): only perform therapeutic treatments beyond the normal narrowing of the ear canal and normal narrowing of the nasal passages: (i) as indicated in the plan of care; (ii) after receiving informed voluntary written consent; and (iii) only if the Certificant is permitted to do so under state law;

Standard VI(f): only perform therapeutic treatments in the oral cavity: (i) as indicated in the plan of care; (ii) after receiving informed voluntary written consent; and (iii) only if the Certificant is permitted to do so under state law;

Standard VI(g): only perform therapeutic treatments into the anal canal: i) as indicated in the plan of care; (ii) after receiving informed voluntary written consent; and (iii) only if the Certificant is expressly authorized to perform colonic irrigation under state law; and

Standard VI(h): only provide therapeutic breast massage: (i) as indicated in the plan of care; (ii) after receiving informed voluntary written consent; and (iii) only if the Certificant is permitted to do so under state law.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Boundary:** A limit that separates one person from another. Its function is to protect the integrity of each person.

**Certificant:** NCBTMB Certificant or applicant for certification.

**Client:** An individual who receives the professional services of a Certificant, regardless of how or if those services are compensated. The term client may include a patient.

**Competency:** Study and development of a particular professional knowledge base and skills associated with and applied in practice within that knowledge base.

**Counter-Transference:** A practitioner's unresolved feelings and issues which are unconsciously transferred to the client.

**Dignity:** The quality or state of being worthy, honored or esteemed.

**Dual Relationships:** An alliance in addition to the client/therapist relationship, such as social, familial, business or any other relationship that is outside the therapeutic relationship.

**Generally Accepted Accounting Principles:** Rules, conventions, standards and procedures that are widely accepted among financial accountants and otherwise known as GAAP.

**Genitalia:** Reproductive organs and structures. Genitalia include the penis, scrotum/testis, vulva (labia majora and minora, clitoris, vestibule), hymen and vagina.

**Impugn:** To assail by words or arguments, oppose or attack as false.

**Integrity:** Honesty. Firm adherence to a code of values.

**Multidimensional Relationships:** Overlapping relationships in which the therapist and client share an alliance, in addition to the therapeutic relationship.

**Progress Notes:** Notes written and kept in a client file that indicate the date of the session, areas of complaint as stated by client, and observations made and actions taken by the practitioner.

**Scope of Practice:** The extent and limits necessary for safe and effective practice in the skills, procedures, actions and processes that Certificants with education and professional training are permitted to utilize within the context of their certification. Scope of practice is defined by the profession and limited, when applicable, by regulatory bodies.

**Sexual Activity:** Any verbal and/or nonverbal behavior for the purpose of soliciting, receiving or giving sexual gratification. Sexual activity may include, but is not limited to: (i) inappropriate touch; (ii) inappropriate hugs; (iii) body language; (iv) verbal dialogue about sexual preferences or fantasies; (v) verbal or physical flirtatious behavior; (vi) seductive or sexually demeaning gestures; (vii) sexual joking; (viii) failure to ensure client's privacy in disrobing/dressing; (ix) filming the client without his or her permission; (x) therapist's breast or pelvic area touching a client; (xi) kissing or other activity that is sexual in nature.

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

**Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (i) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of an individual's employment; (ii) submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals; or (iii) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

**Sexual Misconduct:** Unethical and illegal behavior involving sexualization of, or engagement in, sexualized contact with a client/student/mentee/employee/trainee during or after the professional relationship has ended. This is especially critical due to the power differential in which care providers may use or exploit the trust or influence derived from the professional relationship. Sexual misconduct includes a wide range of sexual activity. The behavior does not have to be coercive to be inappropriate.

**Therapeutic Breast Massage:** Manipulation of the non-muscular soft tissue structure of the breast up to and including the areola and nipple.

**Therapeutic Relationship:** The ongoing relationship between a therapist and a client established to support the client's therapeutic goals. Characteristics of a healthy therapeutic relationship include personal awareness and insight, trust, respect, safety, authenticity, acceptance, empathy, collaborative agreement and the maintenance of personal and professional boundaries.

**Transference:** The displacement or transfer of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors originally related to a significant person, such as a parent, onto someone else, such as a massage therapist (or doctor, psychotherapist, teacher, spiritual advisor, etc.).

# NCBTMB Candidate Handbook

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This handbook contains information on how to become Board Certified in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork or Nationally Certified in Therapeutic Massage. To avoid problems in processing your application, it is important that you follow the guidelines outlined in this handbook and comply with the deadlines detailed herein. If you have any questions about the policies, procedures or processing of your application, please contact the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) online at [www.ncbtmb.org](http://www.ncbtmb.org) or by phone at 1-800-296-0664. Additional copies of the handbook may be obtained from our web site free of charge.

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