

MICHIGAN MASSAGE THERAPIST (MT) LICENSING GUIDE FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

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1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN

OVERVIEW

This guide looks at what you as a foreign-educated massage therapist must do to become eligible for licensing in Michigan. At the same time, it includes some background on the larger massage therapy profession to give you an idea of the variety of opportunities available as you work to build your career.

REGULATION OF THE MASSAGE THERAPIST PROFESSION

The practice of massage therapy in Michigan is regulated by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). You must be licensed to practice as a massage therapist (MT) in Michigan.

The guide assumes that your Michigan license will be your first U.S. massage therapist license. As a foreign-educated MT, you are required to first have your massage therapy education evaluated by, recognized, and accredited by a credential evaluation agency that is a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) member organization. The list of NACES credentialing agencies can be found at www.naces.org.

You will become an MT through Licensure by Examination. The Federation of State Massage Therapy Board's (FSMTB) Massage and Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) exam is administered by Pearson Vue. However, this is just one step in a longer process of education and examination that international MTs must complete to practice in the State.

2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

OVERVIEW

Internationally educated MTs need to meet several requirements to receive Licensure by Examination as an MT in Michigan.

I. Evaluate your foreign degree with a NACES member organization.

LARA requires that you have your foreign massage therapy degree evaluated using a NACES member organization.

- Select an agency off the NACES list
- Apply and pay online for the educational credentials review service
- Make sure that you ask for your report to be prepared for the Michigan Board of Massage Therapy as this will make your record available to the State electronically

If your degree is not deemed equivalent to a U.S. degree, you will be provided information about the courses or subject areas in which you are deficient. If the educational credentials review results in your education being found “not equivalent”, most NACES member organizations have a policy to question or re-evaluate your educational credentials review. You must work directly with your selected NACES member organization to correct any deficiencies in your report; the Michigan Board of Massage Therapy has no role in the re-evaluation process.

II. Submit your licensure application, required supporting documents, and pay the application fee.

Your application sent to the Michigan Board of Massage Therapy should include:

- Licensure application from LARA that can be downloaded from www.michigan.gov/healthlicense
- Appropriate Fee

- A course-by-course credential evaluation completed by a NACES member organization that determines whether the massage therapy curriculum you completed was equivalent to an approved program in Michigan. A copy of the credentialing report must be sent directly to the Michigan Board from the organization that performs the review.
- All applicants for massage therapy must have completed a supervised curriculum in massage therapy that is approved by the board.
- If you have passed the MBLEx, contact FSMTB to have your exam scores sent to the Michigan Board.
- An applicant whose education program was taught in a language other than English must submit a certified score of not less than 80 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language – Internet Based Test.

The licensure application and fee are valid for 2 years. If you have not met all licensing requirements within those 2 years you will need to submit a new application and pay the appropriate fee again.

III. Be fingerprinted by a Michigan-approved vendor for a criminal background check.

Directions for completing the fingerprint requirement are mailed to you from the Department upon receipt of your application.

3. TESTS

Michigan requires you must take and pass the MBLEx to become licensed in Michigan. It does not require additional tests.

The MBLEx is a computer based exam consisting of 100 multiple choice questions. You have a total of 2 hours to complete this exam.

CONTENT AREAS OF THE MBLEx

The content of the MBLEx measures knowledge important for independent practice as a massage therapist in all primary employment settings. The exam questions assess the

following content areas. The percentages show the approximate percent of questions each test taker will receive in the category:

- Anatomy & Physiology (12%)
- Kinesiology (11%)
- Pathology, Contraindications, Areas of Caution, Special Populations (13%)
- Benefits and Physiological Effects of Techniques that Manipulate Soft Tissue (14%)
- Client Assessment, Reassessment & Treatment Planning (17%)
- Overview of Massage & Bodywork Modalities/ Culture/ History (5%)
- Ethics, Boundaries, Laws, Regulations (15%)
- Guidelines for Professional Practice (13%)

SCHEDULING AND TESTING SITE PROCEDURES OF THE MBLEx

The MBLEx is administered through Pearson Vue testing centers. You will receive an Authorization to Test (ATT) from FSMTB via email and you must complete the exam with the 90-day period indicated on your ATT. You may schedule your exam online at www.pearsonvue.com/fsmtb or call toll free at 888.790.4892 to select your date, time and location.

On the day of the exam you should arrive at least thirty minutes before your appointment. You must bring a primary form of ID which must include a photograph and signature and cannot be temporary or expired. You must also bring a secondary form of ID that may or may not include a photograph, but must include a signature and cannot be expired. At check-in a digital photograph and biometric security procedures such as palm vein recognition will be conducted.

FAILING THE MBLEx

FSMTB allows you to retake the MBLEx after thirty days has elapsed from the previous examination attempt. The State of Michigan does not limit the total number of times an applicant may attempt to pass the MBLEx.

PRACTICING FOR THE MBLEX

The official study guide for the MBLEx is available in a convenient spiral-bound book. The Study Guide is the only official MBLEx preparation resource, published FSMTB. The Study Guide can be purchased on the FSMTB website for a fee.

Also, for a fee, those who want the opportunity to become familiar with the Prometric test center environment may take a practice exam at the test center.

4. OTHER CAREERS AND CREDENTIALS

LOWER-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES

You may want to consider whether taking a lower-level job in healthcare in the short-term can help you meet longer-term goals of licensing as an MT. Working in healthcare in a different capacity and with fewer responsibilities may offer you some advantages:

- Your employer may pay for some costs associated with licensing
- You can focus more energy on studying
- You will have a chance to adapt to the U.S. healthcare system and workplace culture in a lower-pressure environment

You should be honest with your employer about your long-term plans. You may find some employers have benefits such as tuition reimbursement or schedule flexibility that will support your goals.

HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER

If you are bilingual and a strong communicator, you may want to research opportunities for work in hospitals as an interpreter. This type of role is not regulated in Michigan, so standards for employment as well as pay and benefits may be very different depending on the employer. You are more likely to have benefits such as tuition reimbursement if you find work as a direct employee of a healthcare facility, instead of working for a company that provides interpretation services to hospitals. You may want to begin your research by directly contacting human resource departments at hospitals.

5. BEYOND LICENSING

MAINTAINING LICENSURE

Your Michigan MT license must be renewed every three years through the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Professional Licensing. Your license will expire on October 31. You are responsible for renewing your license even if you do not receive a notice from the Department, so be certain to keep your contact information up-to-date with their office. You must renew online. You will have sixty days after the expiration date in which you may continue to practice without a lapse in your license as long as you renew within that sixty-day grace period. If you do not renew during that grace period, the expiration date of your license will revert to October 31. If you continue to practice after your license has expired (lapsed), you could have disciplinary action taken against you. If your license does expire, you will be required to apply for relicensure to reactivate your license.

Effective in 2018, every time you renew your license you must certify that you have met an 18-hour continuing education requirement. You need to retain documentation of meeting the continuing education requirement in case you are audited. There are many opportunities to earn these hours, but special rules apply. You should check the Department website for details, or consider joining a professional association that offers continuing education opportunities to members.

LICENSING MOBILITY (ENDORSEMENT)

The State of Michigan grants licensing to MTs either by examination (the process described in this topic) or by endorsement. An MT licensed in another state, who wants to practice in Michigan, must independently meet all Michigan requirements for licensing. If you become licensed in Michigan and want to practice massage therapy in another state, you will need to research the legal requirements for that state.

6. IMPORTANT LINKS

LICENSING AND REGULATION:

- The main page for the licensing of any health profession is www.michigan.gov/healthlicense.
- The page that focuses specifically on massage therapy which includes information regarding the boards, applications and frequently asked questions is: http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-72600_72603_27529_53660---_00.html.
- Contact information: Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Bureau of Professional Licensing
PO Box 30670
Lansing MI 48909

Telephone Number: 517-335-0918
Fax: 517-241-0032
Email: bplhelp@michigan.gov
- The laws that regulate licensing for all health professions including massage therapists can be located at <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-368-1978-15>.
- The administrative rules governing massage therapist practice in Michigan can be located at: http://w3.lara.state.mi.us/orr/Files/AdminCode/1195_2013-031LR_AdminCode.pdf.

TESTING

- [Apply](#) for the MBLEx or download the [Candidate Handbook](#).
- FSMTB offers the [MBLEx Study Guide](#).
- Exam [content outline](#) for the MBLEx.
- Visit the FSTMB website at www.fsmtb.org

CREDENTIAL REVIEW AGENCIES

- NACES www.naces.org/