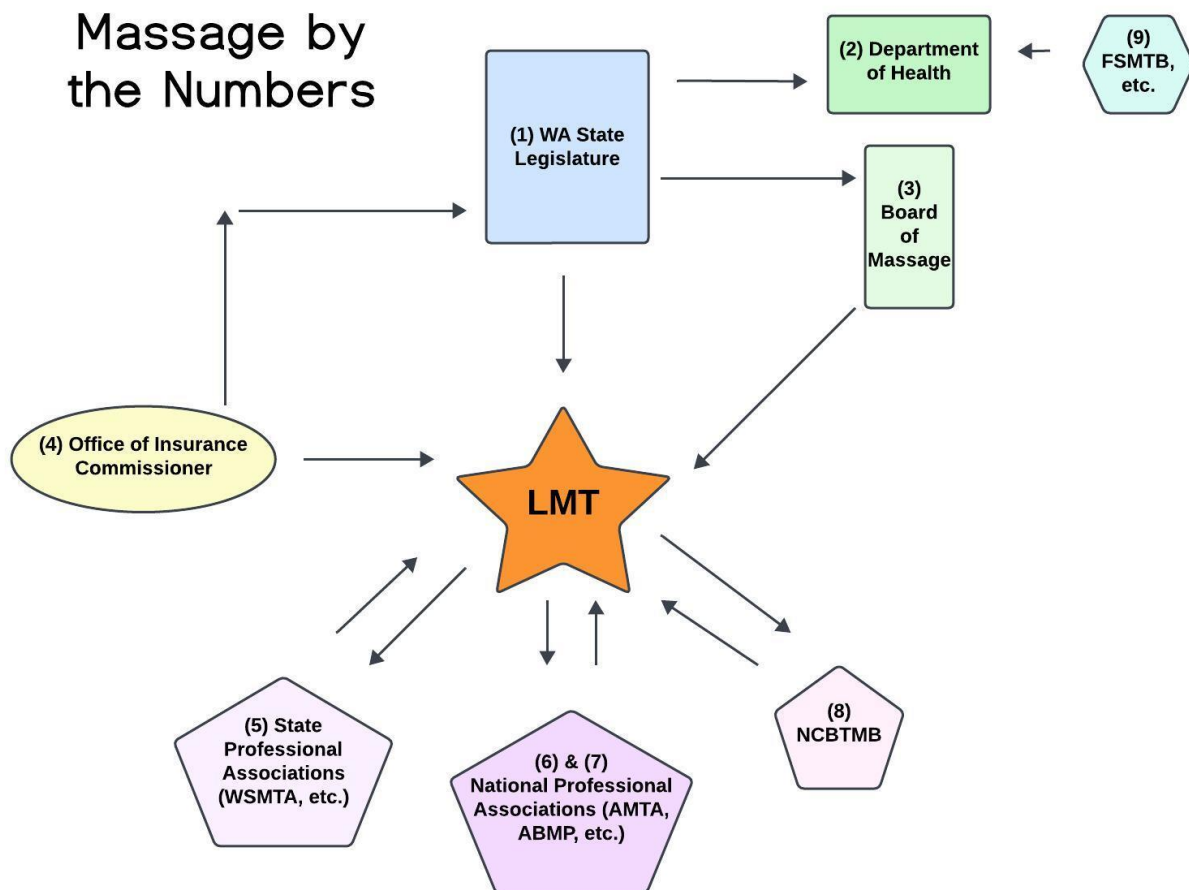


# MESSAGE BY THE NUMBERS

Information for this article was taken from an original article entitled "Massage Therapists' Information Guide to Massage Organizations, Advocacy and Government" written and edited by WSMTA members Stephanie Dickey and Marybeth Berney in December, 2021. Used with both WSMTA and author permission.

LMTs in leadership positions have witnessed a great deal of confusion from a wide range of LMTs about what the various state agencies and organizations *ARE*, as well as the differences in what they *DO*. Below is an illustration showing all of the organizations, entities, and agencies that impact what we do as LMTs AND how they are related to us and to each other.



Many LMTs are confused about *HOW* and *WHERE* to go for information, requests or procedures. And with good reason! There are many acronyms to keep track of, and each entity does very different things.

Follow the numbers to find out more about your world of massage. There are many ways we LMTs can be a part of our profession, and be voices or advocates for the things we believe in, if we know the right places to go.

TIP: For ANY and EVERY question about your license and credentialing requirements, first contact the Department of Health, Board of Massage (BOM) at <https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/MassageTherapist>

## 1 Washington State House of Representatives Health Care and Wellness Committee AND Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee

- Tasked with the primary goal of protecting the public and creating laws and regulations that allow a profession—like massage therapy—to operate without infringement on financial gain, while not harming the public while doing so.
- Define LMT scope of practice and how LMTs can operate within that scope.
- Consider a broad range of issues relating to the provision of physical and behavioral healthcare services (including the licensing and regulation of massage schools and massage practices, and the credentialing of LMTs).
- Consider issues relating to the accessibility and affordability of healthcare in both the private health insurance market and public health programs (such as Medicaid and the state healthcare exchange).
- Create and expand RCWs (Revised Code of Washington rules).
- Learn more at *House Health Care and Wellness Committee/Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee*, <https://leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/HCW/Pages/default.aspx>



## 2 Department of Health (DOH)



- A branch of Washington State's regulatory entities.
- Involved in creating regulatory guidance for all healthcare providers (e.g. protocols and rules established in 2020 for dealing with COVID-19).
- Tasked with the primary goal of protecting the public and creating laws and regulations that allow a profession to operate without infringement on financial gain, while not harming the public while doing so.
- Defines healthcare provider scope of practice, and how providers can operate within that scope.
- Guided by, and answering to, the Secretary of Health.
- Includes the Health Systems Quality Assurance (HSQA) Department, which oversees all boards and commissions that represent and regulate healthcare providers and sets licensure fees. This includes the Board of Massage and the massage therapy profession.
- Learn more at *Department of Health*. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/>

## 3 The Board of Massage\*

- Part of the DOH's Health Systems Quality Assurance (HSQA) Department.
- Tasked with the primary goal of protecting the public and creating laws and regulations that allow the massage therapy profession to operate without infringement on financial gain, while not harming the public while doing so.
- Defines massage therapist scope of practice and determine how LMTs can operate within that scope.
- Promotes the welfare of the state by regulating the competency and quality of the massage therapy programs and LMTs under its jurisdiction.

- Takes new or expanded legislative acts (RCWs) and creates rules known as Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) to give details about how new laws affect massage therapy and LMT scope of practice.
- Defines, evaluates, approves, and designates those massage schools, massage programs, transfer programs, and massage apprenticeship programs including all current and proposed curriculum, faculty, and health, sanitation, and facility standards from which graduation will be accepted as proof of an applicant's eligibility to take the massage licensing examination.
- Reviews approved massage schools and programs periodically.
- Prepares, grades, administers, and supervises the grading and administration of, examinations for applicants for massage licensure.
- Establishes and administers requirements for continuing education.
- Determines which states have educational and licensing requirements for LMTs equivalent to those of this state.
- Establishes the standards and procedures for approving courses of study in massage therapy and may contract with individuals or organizations having expertise in the profession or in education to assist in evaluating courses of study.
- **Does not set our licensure fees.** A profession's licensure fees are based on the costs of support staff and their responsibilities for licensure, complaints, etc.
- Learn more at *Board of Massage (BOM)*, <https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/MassageTherapist>

### **\*Board of Massage Breakdown**

- **5 professional members.** Must be residents of Washington with at least 3 years' experience in the practice of massage immediately preceding their appointment. They must also be both licensed and actively engaged in the practice of massage during their terms.
- **1 massage educator.** Must have at least three years' experience in the teaching or administration of direct student learning of the practice of massage. Is not required to be a currently licensed massage therapist.
- **1 consumer member.** Must not derive his or her livelihood by providing healthcare services or massage therapy and is not a licensed health professional. Must not be

an employee of the state, nor a present or former member of another licensing board.

- All members are appointed by the governor for a 4-year term.
- **Please do not contact members individually with comments and questions.** Instead go to *Board of Massage (BOM)*, <https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/MassageTherapist>

## 4 Office of Insurance Commission (OIC)



- Oversees the laws that are created by legislation for healthcare carriers, and thus healthcare providers.
- Monitors how those laws and rules are administered. For example:
  - ❖ Insures network adequacy (i.e. that there are enough LMTs to serve those insured).
  - ❖ Makes sure providers are paid adequately.
- Learn more at *Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC)*, <https://www.insurance.wa.gov>

## LMTs: Where Do YOU Come Into This Equation?

In many ways, you are ALREADY a part of this process. You are licensed and working in the field of massage and have learned the techniques and laws in our profession to become an LMT.

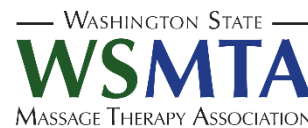
But you also have the opportunity to be part of a larger body of voices, both in our state and across the country through massage organizations. These organizations share these things in common:

- They are not government entities.

- Many of them are nonprofit organizations.
- They often influence and work closely with the massage boards and legislators in states to influence and help create language for our profession.
- Many of the laws that change and the rules that are written, are created by these organizations, and then presented and lobbied for.
- Much of the groundwork for change in our profession begins in these organizations.

The following (5-9) is a list of the organizations that work with the state and that make changes across the country, while advocating for and supporting LMTs and the profession of massage therapy.

## 5 Washington State Massage Therapy Association (WSMTA) (non-profit)



Formed in 2015, the mission of the Washington State Massage Therapy Association (WSMTA) is to “advocate for massage therapy as a recognized and respected healthcare profession.” Until WSMTA, massage was the only healthcare provider group in Washington that was not represented by a state association.

- Not supported or influenced by massage corporations and large chain lobbyist activity.
- Promotes and ensures the accessibility and financial viability of massage therapy as a reimbursed healthcare service through advocacy and communication with government entities/agencies, third-party insurance payers, and allied healthcare organizations.
- Provides necessary resources for practitioners of massage therapy, including advanced education in manual therapy and healthcare business development as well as advanced credentialing avenues.
- Get involved at *Washington State Massage Therapy Association (WSMTA)*, <https://www.mywsmta.org>

## 6 Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals - ABMP (for-profit)



- Offers professional liability insurance and various professional benefits (discounts on massage therapy tools and products, continuing education, business services, etc.)
- Has a Government Relations position that keeps updated on all the states' current laws and changes state by state.
- Sends a representative to WA Board of Massage meetings to support or reject changes to language and to advocate.
- Provides various means of communication such as publications like *Massage & Bodywork*.
- Works on larger, broader issues that affect all massage therapists across all states.
- Get involved at *Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals (ABMP)*.  
<https://www.abmp.com>

## 7 American Massage Therapy Association - AMTA (non-profit)



- Offers professional liability insurance and various professional benefits (discounts on massage therapy tools, products and business services, etc.)
- Sends a representative to WA Board of Massage meetings to support or reject changes to language and to advocate. Seeks cordial relations with all professional massage organizations and requires state and local AMTA chapters to develop joint political efforts with compatible non-AMTA groups.
- Provides various means of communication such as publications like *Massage Therapy Journal*.
- Not affiliated in any way with political action committees (PACs).
- Has chapters (like AMTA-WA) that hold meetings, conduct chapter business, provide professional and social networking opportunities.
- Helps organize educational, legislative, public relations, and membership programs on the state and local levels.
- Get involved at *American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA)*,  
<https://www.amtamassage.org> or <https://wa.wp.amtamassage.org>.

## 8 National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB)



NCBTMB maintains that Board Certification is the highest voluntary credential attainable in the massage therapy and bodywork profession, with a distinct level of achievement beyond entry-level licensure—including completing more education, hands-on experience, and a background check—that will give meaning to your career (and your clients!) with credentials that matter.

- Formerly the top content creator for testing of LMT's in all states.
- Focused now on continuing education and competency and elevating standards of massage therapy.
- Created and maintains the Board Certification credential for the massage therapy profession, representing a lifelong commitment to raising the standards of the massage profession to that of other allied health and medical professions, while enhancing the value and credibility of LMTs.
- Created and maintains the Specialty Certificate, symbolizes advanced education and training in a particular modality or when working with a specific population.
- Supports massage therapy's role in integrative healthcare.
- Provides therapists access to high-quality, advanced programs for specific modalities and populations, to ensure clients receive the best possible care.
- Learn more at *National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB)*, <https://www.ncbtmb.org>

## 9 Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB)

The mission of the FSMTB is to support its member state massage boards (42) in their work to ensure that the practice of massage therapy is provided to the public in a safe and effective manner.



- Founded in 2005 as a result of a meeting convened by the Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals (ABMP). Massage regulators and educators came



together in recognizing the need for consistent scopes of practice; entry-level standards across the country; a valid and reliable universal licensing exam; a common database with licensing and disciplinary information; and simplification of the licensing process to create greater professional mobility (state-to-state movement).

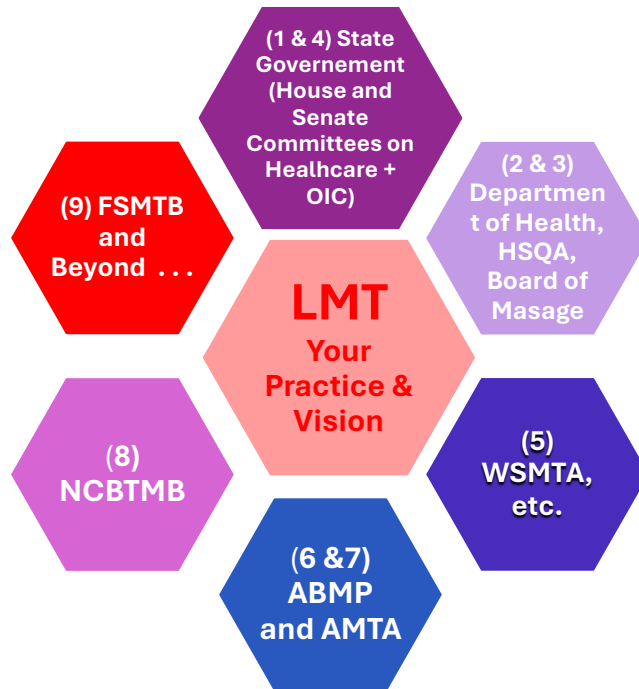
- Ensures the provision of a valid, reliable, licensing examination (the MBLX) to determine entry-level competence.
- Improves the standards of massage therapy education, licensure, and practice through cooperation with entities that share this objective, including other massage therapy organizations, accrediting agencies, governmental bodies, and groups whose areas of interest may coincide with those of member boards.
- Represents the interests of its member boards in matters consistent with the scope of the bylaws.
- Develops CE-*required* course content for some states, and offers this content to other states who wish to use it.
- Learn more at *Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB)*, <https://www.fsmtb.org>

## How to Become Involved

To better understand and support and make positive change within our wonderful profession, get involved—even in small ways—with your local massage groups and organizations.

- **Leave the therapy room** for just a short amount of time and attend a Board of Massage meeting (in person or virtually).
- **Volunteer a bit of time** to work on one of the many projects and topics that the various massage organizations are developing and supporting.
- **Network with others**, talking about ideas, questions, and topics that concern all of us. Groups such as the WSMATA, ABMP, ATMA, NCBTMB and FSMTB all have places where you can get involved, adding your voice to other voices.

## Reach Out Online



This is a lot to take in when you are trying to balance a career, life—and potentially all sorts of other things—but it will be handy information for you at some point.

The best thing to do is find **ONE** place to start getting connected, and the rest will usually flow.

You **DO** have a voice. Go throw that pebble in the pond and watch the waves!

- *House Health Care and Wellness Committee/Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee*, <https://leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/HCW/Pages/default.aspx>
- *Department of Health*. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/>
- *Board of Massage (BOM)*, <https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/MessageTherapist>
- *Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC)*, <https://www.insurance.wa.gov>
- *Washington State Massage Therapy Association (WSMTA)*, <https://www.mywsmta.org>
- *Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals (ABMP)*, <https://www.abmp.com>
- *American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA)*, <https://www.amtamassage.org>
- *Washington Chapter, American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA-WA)*, <https://wa.wp.amtamassage.org>

- *National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB)*, <https://www.ncbtmb.org>
- *Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB)*, <https://www.fsmtb.org>