



HEAL Coalition ALERT: Employment of Your Massage Therapy Students May Be in Jeopardy!

In June 2005, the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) published new standards of eligibility for individuals seeking to take its national certification exam. The standards stipulate that in order to be eligible to sit for the exam, which is the recognized certification requirement for employment in many states, applicants must receive 500 hours of training in specific disciplines provided through “in-class, supervised instruction.”

In other words, if any portion of the education and training were provided via on-line/distance education, then the applicant is ineligible to sit for the certifying exam and therefore may not be able to become licensed and employed in the profession for which she/he has been trained.

With Congress having recently enacted legislation as part of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act expanding student access to distance education, this decision by the NCBTMB is problematic to say the least.

Why can't portions of the required disciplines be completed via on-line/distance education? Isn't it possible that at least some portions of these requisite standards could in fact be provided via “supervised instruction” using synchronous or asynchronous learning...

- 125 hours of instruction in body's systems and anatomy, physiology and kinesiology;
- 200 hours of instruction in massage bodywork assessment, theory and application;
- 40 hours of instruction in pathology;
- 10 hours of instruction in business and ethics; or
- 125 hours of additional instruction in an area or related field that theoretically completes the individuals massage program of study.

The Higher Education Allied Health Leaders (HEAL) Coalition believes that Congress must be made aware of this issue in light of its potential impact on all students' ability to enter the profession upon successful completion of Massage Therapy programs that include a distance education component.

As an institution offering Massage Therapy programs, the HEAL Coalition is concerned that your institution may be at risk. If you either currently offer, or are considering offering portions of your program via distance education in the future, these students may not be eligible to sit for the certifying exam necessary to become licensed and employed as a massage therapist.

If this issue concerns you, please join the HEAL Coalition today, and together we can make Congress aware of the negative impact this will have on students!

If you are interested in joining us, or would like more information regarding the HEAL Coalition, contact Executive Director Tom Netting at (202) 626-8553.