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Pennsylvania Temporarily Allows Limited Distance Education Hours for Massage Therapy Students During COVID-19

Summary:

To apply for licensure as a massage therapist in Pennsylvania, an individual must have completed at least 600 “contact hours” of in-class, postsecondary education instruction approved by the State Board of Massage Therapy Board at a regionally accredited college or university, Pennsylvania private licensed school or its equivalent. A *contact hour* is defined as a “50 to 60-minute period of instruction related to the practice of massage therapy in the physical presence of an instructor or supervisor.”

Board regulations require a minimum number of contact hours in four subject matter areas: (1) 175 hours of instruction in anatomy, physiology, kinesiology and pathology; (2) 250 hours in massage therapy and bodywork assessment, theory and practice; (3) 25 hours in professional ethics and business and law related to a massage therapy business; and (4) 150 hours in specified areas of subject matter aimed at providing students with the “knowledge base” needed to successfully and safely practice massage therapy.

The COVID-19 emergency has required the temporary closure of massage therapy schools and businesses. These closures have made the task of acquiring the minimum 600 hours of in-class instruction more difficult for massage therapy students.

To address this issue, the Department of State requested, and Governor Wolf approved, a temporary suspension of the requirement that the 600 hours of instruction be entirely “in-class” contact hours.

Instead, the Board will allow some instruction to be completed through distance learning during the COVID-19 emergency. **Specifically, massage therapy students in 600-hour programs may obtain up to 100 hours of online instruction in area #1, and up to 25 hours of online instruction in area #3.** Students in programs with more than 600 hours may obtain more than 100 hours and more than 25 hours, respectively, in these areas but in no event shall any massage therapy student – regardless of the number of hours in their education program – have fewer than 75 contact hours in area #1, 250 contact hours in area #2 and 150 contact hours in area #4.

This temporary suspension allows for the accumulation of distance learning hours during the course of the COVID-19 emergency only. Hours obtained via distance learning after the emergency ends will not be recognized or counted towards the minimum required in each instructional area.

For more information, please contact the [State Board of Massage Therapy](#).