



Massage
Therapy
Certification
Examination

CANDIDATE
HANDBOOK

2010

www.americanmedicalmassage.com



national board certification agency

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CANDIDATE
HANDBOOK
OF THE
NATIONAL BOARD
CERTIFICATION
AGENCY

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American Medical Massage Association Code of Ethics
(Revised December 2009)

All professionals certified by the National Board Certification Agency are required to read and to accept the AMMA published Code of Ethics:

1. Provide the highest level of quality care to anyone that seeks your professional help.
2. Accept all clients without discrimination.
3. Respect the confidentiality of your client.
4. Practice only the techniques and modalities in which you have been professionally trained and certified.
5. In no way participate, engage, or suggest any type of sexual activity with your client.
6. Maintain a safe, clean and professional environment for clients at all times.
7. Do not publish sexually suggestive language or photographs in marketing, advertisements, or websites.
8. Dress in appropriate and professional attire. Do not dress in short shorts, short skirts, without a shirt or top, or dress in any manner that is sexually suggestive.
9. Make sure that your client is always properly draped with minimal exposure of the client and in a manner that projects client modesty.
10. Refrain from using profanity or crude language either with or to your s or in marketing, advertisements, or websites.
11. Maintain standard professional boundaries with your clients in accordance with the requirements defined by the legal system relative to client abuse, whether financial, sexual or psychological.
12. Recognize and honor the rights of your clients to refuse care, and your right to refuse treatment to any client on moral and ethical grounds.
13. Be observant of, and obedient to, the ordinances and laws of the state in which you practice as they pertain to massage therapy specifically, and health care in general.
14. In no way associate with, be affiliated with, work for, own, or be a partner in any massage facility, parlor, adult establishment, escort service, or activity that is deemed to be illicit, immoral or illegal, whether or not this activity has resulted in criminal conviction.
15. Follow all policies, procedures, guidelines, regulations, codes, and requirements promulgated by the AMMA, NBCA, AHS or their association or administrative affiliates.

All NBCA Certified professionals are expected to adhere to the highest standards in our industry. If for any reason, a certified massage professional has violated the Code of Ethics, that professional will be reviewed for appropriate action, up to and including termination of certification.



...A rational and ethical credentialing alternative for you!

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the National Board Certification Agency (NBCA) is to promote the advancement of scientifically based conventional, complementary, and alternative health care education and training, testing and examination, and image and recognition within the medical and allied health care, education, and scientific communities.

The NBCA seeks to distinguish it's self as an organization dedicated to serving the professional needs of the health care professional by providing appropriate access to rational and ethical evidence based credentialing, education, and examination.

The National Board Certification Agency seeks through its efforts to uplift evidence based complementary and alternative medicine to the level of accepted medical specialties within the allied health care community. A National Board Certification Agency professional credential is recognized as representing the highest standards in the professional industries those professionals it represents.





The Development of a New Approach in National Board Examination

In 1998 the National Board Certification Agency, developed their first national board examination, an entry level massage therapy exam. This examination measures professional accomplishments for massage therapists who have learned evidence based massage therapy. This National Board Certification Agency examination is modeled after similar examinations written for the allied medical professions.

The NBCA also developed a second exam, the medical manual therapy Diplomat examination for national board certification. This exam is a difficult six hour multi-level examination. This demanding examination is modeled after exams that are provided to manual therapy physical therapists, physicians and individuals practicing health care at the master's and doctoral level. Diplomat training and testing is a routine practice in medicine, chiropractic and allied health care professions. The NBCA was the first to bring this professional status and credential to the manual therapist.

Since 1998, the National Board Certification Agency has developed examinations for national board certification in practical acupuncture, massage therapy, manual medicine, medical assisting, medical billing, personal training, naturopathy, and lymphedema technician for the purpose of:

- Establishing measurable training and educational standards in complementary, alternative and allied health care.
- Establishing evidence based educational curriculum and practices as a vital professional ethic.



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- Recognizing the competency and rewarding the accomplishments of professional practitioners.
- Differentiating between qualified, professional national board certified practitioners and therapists who lack appropriate training and certification.





Exam Statistical Evaluation through Michigan State University

In 2005 the Center for Statistical Training and Consulting at Michigan State University completed the evaluation and assessment of the NBCA Entry Level Massage National Board Certification Examination. The completion of the statistical evaluation process adds credibility to the exam and makes it legally defensible. Since 2006, all NBCA exams undergo the process of statistical evaluation, assessment, and job task analysis.

These efforts are designed to provide the complementary, alternative and allied health care practitioner with the professional credentials needed to gain access to the growing opportunities and jobs that are becoming increasingly available to competently trained professionals.

Your Professional Development

The NBCA welcomes the opportunity to serve the portion of the complementary, alternative and allied health care communities that have the capacity and ability to practice their vocation at an accepted level of professional competency in clinical environments.

The NBCA is committed to serving your professional credentialing needs and to achieve this end we subscribe to the highest ethical and business standards. Do not hesitate to contact our friendly and efficient staff regarding any questions or concerns that you may have regarding your testing experience.

We are here for you.



The NBCA Massage Therapy Certification Exam

This is What You Need to Know about the AMMA NBCA Exam

The NBCA Massage Therapy exam consists of four sections -

- Part One: Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology Kinesiology
- Part Two: Bony Landmarks
- Part Three: Practice, Ethics, Jurisprudence and Treatment Components
- Part Four: Clinical Interpretation

This Exam is a Basic Entry Level Exam for Beginning Massage Therapists

This exam is designed to ensure that the practitioner has the knowledge to enter the work place and to handle basic massage procedures.

Eligibility:

This entry level exam is available to massage therapists who have completed and successfully graduated from a state approved and licensed massage training program. The NBCA accepts the hour requirements of any state that regulates massage and the requirements of state massage boards and regulatory agencies.

The NBCA Test Taking Process is Designed with You in Mind

The NBCA exam is as close to you as your local public or academic library where your exam will be individually proctored. Your exam date can be scheduled within 30 days or less (in pre-arranged individualized circumstances).



This is a Fair and Honest Process for You, the NBCA Exam has been Independently Evaluated

The Michigan State University Center for Statistical Analysis and Consulting has validated this exam through psychometric evaluation and job task analysis to assure that the questions are a fair representation of the knowledge you should have to be qualified as a massage therapist. A qualified group of professional experts and peer massage therapists have also evaluated this exam (via job task analysis) to assure that the questions are relevant to situations that you will encounter in the workplace.

The NBCA entry level massage credentialing exam contains 200 multiple choice questions and 5 multiple choice clinical essay questions for a total of 205 multiple choice questions.

The exam questions are completed and marked with a number 2 HB pencil on a Scantron sheet and are then graded and scored on the Scantron. All exam results are digitally stored in our secure computer network and we maintain redundant offsite backup of all exam data and exam results.



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A Brief Review of the Exam Outline and Content

Section 1 (Approximately 49 percent of exam content)

Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, and Kinesiology (100 Multiple Choice Questions)

1. Basic introductory anatomy, physiology, pathology and kinesiology terminology.
2. Origin, insertion, and actions of muscles.
3. Palpation points for muscles in specific regions.
4. Muscles that oppose, assist, and stabilize joints.
5. Types of muscle contractions.
6. Basic muscle trauma, diseases, disorders, and soft tissue pathology.
7. Body cavities and planes of the body.
8. General body systems: Identification and basic knowledge of their function.
9. Body tissue injury and repair processes.

Section 2 (Approximately 24 percent of exam content)

Bony Landmarks (50 Multiple Choice Questions)

1. Types of bones.
2. Number of bones in particular regions.
3. Bony landmarks.
4. Classifications, types and structures of joints.
5. Names of bones, structures and surfaces.
6. Bone traumas, diseases and disorders.

Section 3 (Approximately 24 percent of exam content)

Practice, Ethics, Jurisprudence, and Treatment Components (50 Multiple Choice Questions)

1. History and types of massage.
2. Hygiene, cross infection and infection control.
3. Ethics, boundaries, misconduct, and massage scope of practice.
4. Draping and correct patient positioning.
5. General patient and physical assessment procedures
 - Range of motion assessment
 - Palpation assessment



6. Application of massage strokes.
7. Treatment planning, patient communication, confidentiality, clinical case notes.
8. Massage indications and contraindications.
9. Legal issues, liability, certification, licensing.
10. Ethical means and methods of building your practice.

Section 4 (Approximately 2.5 percent of exam content)
Clinical Interpretation and Patient Safety (5 Questions)

A case history review of a patient is presented, and you select the correct method of treatment from multiple choice answers provided.

The purpose of this section of the exam is to test your knowledge of simple patient presenting situations where there may be contraindications to massage, circumstances where appropriate patient referral is required, or it may be appropriate to treat the patient.

Your Exam Day!

When you arrive to take your exam your proctor will ask you to present two forms of personal identification. Your primary form of personal identification must be a photo ID such as a driver's license, passport, or other officially issued photo identification. If you cannot provide this form of personal identification you will not be allowed to take the exam and you will forfeit your paid fees. Your second form of ID may be a credit, debit or bank card, a school ID card or a U.S. Social Security Card. If you have any questions regarding appropriate personal identification please contact us.



Preparing for and taking the NBCA Massage Therapy Certification Exam

Arrive approximately thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled time of the exam to allow yourself time to relax and to organize your materials.

If you are late for the exam, you will not be allowed to take it. There are no exceptions.

You must contact the NBCA office a full five business days prior to the exam if you are scheduled for an exam and cannot attend. Failure to contact the NBCA will result in a failing grade.

The exam will be cancelled or delayed only for an emergency or inclement weather. In the event of inclement weather, you will be notified. An emergency constitutes an unexpected medical emergency or death in the family. Work schedules are not considered an emergency. If you are scheduled to work on exam day, you must make prior arrangements with your employer to enable you to sit for your scheduled exam date.

Examination dates and registration deadlines are provided on the exam registration form. Your registration must be submitted by the deadline or you will not be allowed to take the exam on that date.

The security of the examination is strict. You will be read the list of Rules and Regulations by the exam proctor. These Rules and Regulations must be followed. Any violation will deem your exam as void and will be considered as a failing grade.

You are provided with exam results by letter. Results will not be provided over the phone. If you fail any portion of the exam, you are allowed unlimited attempts at the failed section(s) of the exam. All exam information is confidential.



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If your examination fee is paid by check and the check is returned for non-sufficient funds, you will not be allowed to sit for the scheduled exam until the fee has been paid.

If your check is returned, you may be required to submit a money order or cashier's check as payment.

If you have a disability covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and would like to request an accommodation in testing, please have an appropriate professional (education professional, doctor, counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist) with current knowledge of your disability certify in writing that your disability requires the requested test accommodation and provide us with a copy of this request in writing.

If you have documented learning disabilities or special needs the NBCA will do everything possible to accommodate your special needs. Please notify us well in advance if you need special assistance with taking the exam.

Prior to the Exam:

Don't cram the night before the exam. You should establish a routine of study over the course of a few days or weeks prior to the exam date. When you establish this method, you will find that you are more prepared and comfortable with the information.

The night before the exam, review the material. Relax and have a good dinner. Keep your routine the same. Get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast.

Make sure to have all the supplies that you will need for the exam. Once you arrive at the exam location, make sure you understand the timing of the exam, opportunities for breaks, etc.



Taking the Exam:

Your exam proctor will review all of the rules regulations and procedures of the exam with you prior to your beginning the exam.

Once the exam clock starts you have two (2) hours to complete the exam. Once the exam clock starts the time allotted to take the exam is counting down, if you need to take a break for any reason, the exam clock will continue to run. Use your allotted exam time carefully.

Special accommodations, regarding language translation, additional time to take the exam, and having the exam administered orally will be considered and may be granted when requested in writing and thirty (30) days in advance of the examination date.

You may take restroom or special needs breaks, but the clock does not stop and will continue to run.

Read all directions carefully. Use a number 2 HB pencil only.

Pass through each section three times. In the first pass answer the questions that you know, then do a second pass to work on those questions that are more difficult and a third pass as a final check.

Make sure you read each question carefully to assure that you understand it. Then carefully read each answer before choosing one.

If you skip a question, place a mark alongside the number on the Scantron sheet so that you can easily return to the question later.

If you do not know the answer to a question you are statistically better off guessing than you are leaving the answer blank.

Do not write, doodle, markup, or draw on the exam.

If you begin to get tense, take several deep breaths and countdown to ten. Stay confident and relax.



After *You* Successfully Pass the NBCA Exam



A Continuing Education Requirement

Once you have been certified, you must maintain your certification by taking annual continuing education courses. Failure to take continuing education courses will suspend and/or terminate your national board certification. You must take twelve (12) clock hours of approved continuing education annually to maintain certification in good standing.

The NBCA and AHS association affiliates provide you with several options for maintaining continuing education.

Please visit the AHS web site at - (www.americanhealthsource.org) - or call our office for more information.

If your certification expires, you will be required to retake and repay for the exam.

If you are taking the exam as a requirement for state regulation or licensure notify the AMMA NBCA and our staff will send your official exam transcript directly to the state department and/or board that will process your application. There is a fee for this service.



Exam Scoring

Your exam will be scored as either a pass or a fail. A passing or failing score is determined by your overall score on the exam.

The NBCA is a criterion-referenced exam also known as a CRT. The NBCA exam has been evaluated by subject matter experts under the direct supervision of experts in testing and psychometrics from Human Resource Associates and Michigan State University Center for Statistical Training and Consulting. Criterion-referenced exams are intended to effectively measure how well a person has learned a specific body of knowledge and skills. The NBCA exam has been designed in a manner that allows a massage professional with basic entry level knowledge, training, and skills to earn a passing score. There are two important operational concepts employed in the creation and development of the NBCA exam:

1. The fundamental obligation of massage boards and regulators to ensure public safety.
2. The right of the massage professional to a fair and measured evaluation process and the right to work.

Criterion-referenced standard setting begins with the establishment of minimum acceptable levels of competence for safe practice that candidates must possess in order to pass the examination. The standard setting is a group process. The group is composed of massage practitioners representing all aspects of the practice of massage.

To ensure that the description and definitions of the profession represents the job tasks of practitioners entering the profession, the study group always includes a number of entry-level practitioners.

In August of 2009 the NBCA adopted a modified Angoff process for the scoring of the exam. The modified Angoff process is used to determine the scaled score. This method of scoring was adopted by the AMMA NBCA Exam Committee of Subject Matter Experts in consultation with the testing and statistical experts from Human Resource Associates and Michigan State University Center for Statistical Training and Consulting.



Your notification, as to whether or not you have passed or failed the NBCA exam, will be mailed to you within seven (7) days of your exam date. Please allow time for the notification to arrive via postal mail.

Your performance on the exams and your exam score will be maintained under strict confidentiality. When you want to have an exam transcript sent to a state licensing or regulatory board, or other official government agency, you will need to apply to the NBCA in writing requesting that this action be taken on your behalf.

Your exam data and scores will be stored indefinitely in a secure electronic format.

What if You Fail to Pass the NBCA?

Your initial exam application and registration fee allows you unlimited attempts to take and to pass the exam. If your overall exam score falls below the exam pass rate, you will be allowed to retake the exam. The only exception to this exam rule is where state massage regulatory boards (official government agencies) have established other requirements for the NBCA and the NBCA has agreed to comply with those revised requirements.

You only pay one initial exam application and registration fee; there is no additional charge for additional attempts to pass the exam.

If you fail the exam the NBCA exam administrative staff will contact you regarding establishing a date to retake your exam. In addition, you will be provided with information, based upon the areas of the exam that you had difficulties with, in order to assist you with further preparation for passing the exam on your next attempt.

If you fail the exam you have the right to challenge the results and the NBCA exam administrative staff will rescore and reevaluate your exam. If you are going to challenge your exam results you must do so in writing, via postal mail, and you have thirty (30) days from the date that you took your exam to contact us.

National Board Certification Agency
2040 Raybrook St SE Ste 103
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
888-375-7245 (toll free)



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Your National Board Certification Agency Professional Certification Credential

Be proud of your NBCA national certification credential. It is yours and you have earned it! This certification credential is yours for life. Your NBCA certification will remain active as long as you maintain your annually required and approved continuing education requirements. If you fall behind on your annually required continuing education requirements please contact the NBCA administrative staff for information on how you can obtain the required continuing education hours and bring your certification from inactive status back to an active status.

Please refer once again to the previous section on continuing education in this handbook.



Communication!

The NBCA has one central mission. You! We are here to serve you so if you have any questions or if you need assistance never hesitate to contact us.

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NBCA Exam Rules, Guidelines and Notifications

Exam Security, Confidentiality, and Privacy Rules

The NBCA exam content is copyrighted and the proprietary property of the National Board Certification Agency, American Medical Massage Association, and American Health Source. By applying for and by taking the NBCA exam you agree to maintain strict confidentiality regarding the exams content. Under no circumstance may any part of the NBCA exam be copied, reproduced or transmitted to any other party.

The NBCA exam administrative staff will maintain strict confidentiality regarding your personal and professional information and exam data and scores. We cannot provide you, or any other party, with information over the telephone or via email regarding your exam data or scores.

Any candidate that is found to have violated the NBCA security or confidentiality rules will have their exam scores cancelled and will not be eligible to retake the exam.

Any candidate that is found to have violated the NBCA security or confidentiality rules may be subject to criminal and/or civil legal action.

Cheating on the Exam

Any candidate found to be cheating on the exam will receive a failing score and will not be eligible to retake the exam.

NBCA Legal Representation

For all matters pertaining to the defense of the exam the NBCA, AMMA, and AHS are represented by the law firm of Butzel Long.

110 West Michigan
Suite 1100
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 517 372 6622
Fax: 517 372 6672



AMMA NBCA Exam Committee of Subject Matter Experts and Professional Advisory Board



The NBCA has been guided and directed by the many statistical, psychometric, and job task analysis experts at Michigan State University Center for Statistical Training and Consulting, including Sandra E. Herman, Ph.D., Steven Pierce, Ph.D., and Yu Fang, M.A.

**CSTAT - Center for Statistical Training and Consulting
Michigan State University
178 Giltner Hall East Lansing, MI 48824**

The core working group of NBCA statistical experts includes Tom Fuller, Ph.D and Virginia G. Dusseau, M.A., L.P.C. The expert panel of subject matter contributors to the NBCA exam includes several dozen massage and educational professionals. The NBCA Professional Advisory Board includes the following professionals:

Linda Hegstrand, M.D., Ph.D
Ramin Rahimi, D.O., FAAPMR
Richard Reschke, D.N.
Jeane Plastino-Wood, L.M.T.
Rudy DePerio, M.A.
Dennis McBroom, M.M.T.
Ellen Chen, M.A.
Douglas Chung, M.A., M.S.W., Ph.D.
Tom Fuller, Ph.D.
Shahidah El Amin, R.N.
Jaime Manfra, C.M.T., N.D.
Doug Pampalona, L.M.T.
Virginia G. Dusseau, M.A., L.P.C.
Carol Baggerly, D.N.
Gregory T. Lawton, D.N., D.C.



The work on and the development of the NBCA exam is an ongoing and constantly evolving process. The NBCA exam committee and administrative staff have developed a question pool of over 6000 exam questions. As candidate's complete exams, and on an annual basis, the NBCA exam is reevaluated and examined for validity.

These continuing efforts provide the NBCA with vital information pertaining to the effectiveness and appropriateness of this test instrument.

The NBCA organizational efforts pertaining to the ongoing job task analysis (JTA) process are maintained by the NBCA Expert Exam Committee composed of psychologists, psychometricians, and other testing and professional experts specializing in work-related assessments.

All candidates that take the NBCA exam are invited and encouraged to complete the latest version of the NBCA Job Task Analysis Survey.

Currently, and as was begun in 2009, the NBCA JTA effort is being directed by Steven Pierce, Ph.D, Associate Director, Center for Statistical Training and Consulting at Michigan State University.

These exam rules are subject to the authority of state massage regulatory boards, and/or other official government agencies.

For this reason these policies, rules, regulations and guidelines are subject to change at any time in order to comply with the requirements of massage regulatory boards and/or other official government agencies within a specific state.

In several specific cases massage regulatory boards and/or government agencies have established other requirements for the NBCA and the NBCA has agreed to comply with those revised requirements.



The NBCA Application Process

To take the NBCA exam please do one of the following:

1. Visit the American Medical Massage Association website and download the application, and other documents, from the site –

www.americanmedicalmassage.com
2. Call the NBCA or write to the NBCA and request that your registration packet be sent to you –

**National Board Certification Agency
2040 Raybrook St., SE Ste 103
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
888-375-7245 (toll free)
616-575-9066 (fax)**

3. Contact the NBCA via email and request that we either email or mail your registration packet to you, or request our assistance to direct you to the correct online download link and documents.

The NBCA application will guide you through the steps and information that you will need to submit to be deemed eligible to take the NBCA exam.



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Recommended Study References for the NBCA Massage Therapy Certification Exam

A Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology. (3rd edition). Baltimore: Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, Werner, Copyright 2005.

Illustrated Essentials of Musculoskeletal Anatomy, Megabooks, Inc., Seig and Adams, Copyright 2009

Massage Therapy Principles and Practice, St. Louis: Saunders and Elsevier, Salvo, Copyright 2003

NBCA Study Guide Booklet, American Health Source, Inc., Copyright 2010

Trail Guide to the Body, (3rd edition). Boulder: Books of Discovery, Biel, Copyright 2005.

Theories, Concepts and Protocols, Volume I, (9th Edition), American Health Source, Inc., Copyright 2009

Theory and Practice of Therapeutic Massage, (4th edition), Baltimore: Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, Beck, Copyright 2006.



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The information in this handbook serves as a primary source of information regarding the AMMA NBCA entry level massage therapy national certification exam. Additional information may be found in the AMMA NBCA Exam Study Guide, as well as, on the website of the American Medical Massage Association found at www.americanmedicalmassage.com.

Other sources of information regarding the AMMA NBCA exam are also included on the exam application form and the AMMA Code of Ethics. It is not possible to include all documents and/or every rule and guideline pertaining to the NBCA exam in this handbook, therefore additional rules and requirements may apply.

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