



## **Approved Provider/Continuing Education Overview**

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The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) administers two certification programs accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). Continuing education (CE) is a vital part of certification programs that credential professionals across the United States, and NCBTMB established its Approved Provider (AP) program as a key CE component of its massage therapy and bodywork credentials.

The principal intent of NCBTMB's AP program is to ensure that certificants have access to reliable, credible, high-quality continuing education throughout their careers. By obtaining continuing education, a practitioner demonstrates a personal and public commitment to further developing competence in the profession, which is why CE continues to play such a critical role in NCBTMB's certification programs and with state regulatory boards as well.

An ancillary benefit of NCBTMB's AP program is to assist practitioners who wish to share their knowledge, expertise and abilities as CE instructors, but may lack the necessary skills exhibited by academically prepared educators. By following NCBTMB's Reference Guide and Initial Application for Approved Providers, these individuals can begin to learn what is expected of CE providers.

When NCBTMB's AP program was developed over a decade ago, CE courses were much fewer in number, and each newly submitted offering was vetted for content by peer group committees of subject matter experts. Over time, the universe of CE expanded exponentially; with thousands of CE courses now being taught by NCBTMB APs around the nation. With this prodigious amount of offerings, the AP program transitioned to its current sample and audit approach.

Currently, aspiring and established CE providers who wish to become NCBTMB APs must submit an application that demonstrates their competency and ability to:

- Fulfill qualifications to teach
- Describe course content
- Write measurable learning outcomes
- Record effective time breakdowns
- Define administrative policies for record retention and security
- Create ethical and effective marketing and promotional materials
- Honor NCBTMB's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

When reviewing AP applications, NCBTMB also examines the content of one or more representative courses delineated by the applicant. If approved, APs are expected to ensure that the same standards documented in the submitted course(s) are applied to any and all additional courses offered. The sample course(s) is vetted for:

- Scope – subject matter accurate and complete, may be practiced legally and without supervision, and reflects legitimate massage therapy/bodywork based modalities or subjects
- Relevance – modalities or subjects that pertain to the massage therapy/holistic profession
- Evidence-informed outcomes – defined learning outcomes for measuring the amount of information retained by students

- Practicability – material can be incorporated into other modalities or used alone in a massage therapist’s or bodyworker’s practice
- Overall value – to certificants/consumers

### **The Evolving Approved Provider/Continuing Education Model**

NCBTMB recognized the need to ensure continuous relevant and credible continuing education for the growth of the profession and understands how critical it is to solicit input from massage therapy/bodywork professionals. Most recently, we did this by inviting thought leaders from across the country to participate in the Massage Approved Provider Panel (MAPP) – including representatives from ABMP, AMTA, COMTA, FSMTB and NCCAOM, as well as state board members, Approved Providers, school administrators and certificants. The meeting was held May 2 – 4, 2011 in Chicago, Illinois.

These individuals came together, as a group, in a spirit of unity with a mutual goal of helping redefine the national AP/CE program to benefit the profession. The meeting was a great success and NCBTMB will be incorporating the collaborative efforts into the new model of this program. Look for updates throughout the year.

### **Approved Provider through Recertification and Beyond**

As the profession evolves and massage therapy enters the advanced practice realm with National Certification for Advanced Practice (NCAP) and then specialty certification (i.e., medical, oncology, pediatric, sports, etc.), NCBTMB’s programs and processes will also evolve, by drawing on the knowledge, guidance and expertise of leaders in the field – educators and school owners, peer organizations, allied health professionals, state board members, certificants and Approved Providers. Together, these professionals will work to help determine not only the future of CE, but the future of the profession itself.

