



# Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation

## Division of Professional Regulation

PAT QUINN  
Governor

BRENT E. ADAMS  
Secretary

DONALD W. SEASOCK  
Acting Director  
Division of Professional Regulation

November 16, 2010

Jean Robinson  
Government Relations Director  
Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Dear Ms. Robinson:

The Department has received an inquiry asking whether the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) would qualify as an Asian bodywork organization for the purposes of the Asian bodywork exemption to licensure contained in the Massage Licensing Act (225 ILCS 57). It was also requested that our response be directed to you.

The Act in Section 15 requires that persons engaging in massage must be licensed by the Department as a massage therapist. Section 25 provides for certain exemptions to the requirement of licensure. One of these, contained in paragraph (g), is as follows:

Practitioners of Asian bodywork approaches are exempt from this Act if they are members of the American Organization of Bodywork Therapies of Asia as certified practitioners or if they are approved by an Asian bodywork organization based on a minimum level of training, demonstration of competency, and adherence to ethical standards set by their governing body.

ABMP membership includes a diverse array of massage, bodywork, and somatic professionals. Most practice "traditional" massage therapy but others practice reflexology, neuromuscular and movement therapy, shiatsu, reiki, other energy work, or one or more of numerous other practice specialties according to the ABMP website. Persons seeking certified or professional membership must be licensed in their state or meet the following eligibility requirements:

500 hours of massage education from an approved program or  
Passing score on the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) or one of the National Certification Exams (NCE) or  
Minimum of 50 hours of massage training and a current nursing or physical therapy license.

The Department lacks the authority under the Act to issue or approve exemptions. The Act does provide that a person performing services as specified in Section 25 and meeting all conditions thereunder is not required to obtain a massage therapy license to perform these services and would not be subject to prosecution for unlicensed massage therapy services.

Jean Robinson  
ABMP  
November 16, 2010

2

It is our opinion that a person practicing Asian bodywork who qualified for and is granted certified or professional membership in ABMP would be exempt from massage therapy licensure under paragraph (g) of Section 25 of the Act. This is based upon ABMP's statement to the Department that since the State of Illinois licenses massage therapists but not other bodywork specialties, ABMP's eligibility requirements for certified and professional membership for persons from non-licensure states would apply to Asian bodywork professionals in the State of Illinois. ABMP is not exclusively an Asian bodywork organization but based upon the information available about the organization, it does serve practitioners of this practice specialty.

We would make one cautionary note. If a person's practice includes both Asian bodywork and massage therapy, a massage therapy license is required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Thompson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Thompson  
General Counsel  
Division of Professional Regulation