

# Massage Therapy Establishment Licensing

## State-by-State Analysis Guide

Julie Onofrio, LMT • lookbeforeyoubookamassage.com • Updated July 2026 • Laws subject to change — verify with state board

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### How to use this guide

Each state entry answers five key questions to help you evaluate whether an establishment licensing law is actually doing what it claims to do:

1. What does the law actually require? (statutory requirements, fees, inspections, background checks)
2. Who bears the burden? (who is regulated, who is exempt, sole practitioners vs. multi-therapist businesses)
3. What do the penalties look like? (civil fines, criminal charges, license revocation — and are they enforced?)
4. What has changed since the law passed? (outcome data, enforcement history, documented effects)
5. What do LMTs in that state say? (primary research gap — this data does not yet exist)

Items flagged [VERIFY] need confirmation from the state board or official source before publication. Items flagged [PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] represent original research opportunities no one has yet undertaken.

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■ **DISCLAIMER:** This guide is for educational and advocacy purposes only. Laws change. Always verify current statutory language with the official state board or a licensed attorney before citing in print or using in litigation.

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### Strength ratings

- **STRONG** — full licensure with enforcement teeth
  - **MODERATE** — registration or partial requirements
  - **LIMITED** — local/opt-in or standards only
  - **BILL/UNKNOWN** — not yet enacted or unclear
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## Alabama

**STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH**

*Full license required | Background check | SOB exclusion*

#### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full establishment licensure required before operating. No SOB may be licensed or operate as a massage establishment. Establishments must employ only licensed massage therapists. Board may inspect at any time during business hours. New law (Act 2026-162, effective 10/1/2026) adds mandatory pre-licensure criminal history background check. Prior law only required background check after a complaint. One LMT must be designated to ensure compliance with state law.

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage therapy establishments. The owner, lessee, or legal possessor must apply. Both owners and therapists are regulated. Businesses where massage is incidental to another primary function may apply for an exemption — but no exemption is granted to SOBs. License is non-transferable.

**3. What do the penalties look like?**

Board may inspect at any time. License denial and revocation available. Mandatory background check now required at initial application (effective 10/1/2026). [VERIFY: specific civil fine schedule from board rules]

**4. What has changed since the law passed?**

Significant recent update: Act 2024-361 and Act 2025-395 amended the law, with Act 2026-162 adding the pre-licensure background check effective 10/1/2026. [VERIFY: pull Alabama Massage Therapy Board annual reports for licensee and establishment counts before and after updates]

**5. What do LMTs in that state say?**

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Survey Alabama LMTs on whether establishment licensing has affected their ability to find employment or operate a legitimate practice.

Source: <https://admincode.legislature.state.al.us/api/chapter/532-X-4>

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## Alaska

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*Registration only | Health professional owner exemption*

**1. What does the law actually require?**

Registration (not full licensure) required since March 25, 2020 under 12 AAC 79.930. Must submit application, notarized self-inspection report, required fee, and proof of current state business license. Owner must notify the state within 30 days of any change in ownership or location.

**2. Who bears the burden?**

Applies to any fixed or mobile business engaging in massage for compensation or using the word 'massage' in advertising. Critical exemption: if the majority owner holds a license as an LMT, chiropractor, acupuncturist, naturopath, physician, APRN, midwife, or PT/OT, registration is NOT required. This covers most legitimate businesses — but could be exploited by a bad-faith owner who obtains an LMT license.

**3. What do the penalties look like?**

Unregistered establishments found through inspection or complaint must pay an investigation fee per investigation. [VERIFY: are there additional civil fines or penalties beyond the investigation fee?]

**4. What has changed since the law passed?**

Law went into effect March 2020. [VERIFY: has the Alaska board published data on how many establishments have registered?]

**5. What do LMTs in that state say?**

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] The health-professional-owner exemption may mean most legitimate establishments are exempt. Survey Alaska LMTs on whether registration has had any practical effect.

Source: [https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/5/pub/MAS\\_Statutes.pdf](https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/5/pub/MAS_Statutes.pdf)

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## Colorado

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*No establishment license | Law enforcement enforces | Criminal penalties*

**1. What does the law actually require?**

Colorado has no establishment license. Under 12-235-119, local law enforcement agencies may inspect massage therapy licenses and business premises for compliance. If unlicensed practice is found, the local law enforcement agency SHALL charge the person with a misdemeanor. Local governments cannot enact ordinances regulating massage therapy practice — state law preempts this. No fee may be charged for inspections.

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

No establishment licensing burden on businesses. The burden falls on law enforcement to inspect. Sole proprietorships in a person's residence may only be inspected upon complaint. This is a unique model: law enforcement, not a board, is the enforcement mechanism.

#### 3. What do the penalties look like?

Unlicensed practice discovered during inspection = mandatory misdemeanor charge by local law enforcement. No establishment fine schedule. [VERIFY: how frequently do local Colorado law enforcement agencies actually conduct these inspections?]

#### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

Colorado's model is the closest existing example to the 'law enforcement enforces civil licensing violations' approach. [VERIFY: interview Colorado law enforcement or board staff about real-world use of this inspection authority.]

#### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Colorado LMTs have no establishment licensing burden. Survey whether they believe law enforcement inspection authority is used effectively.

Source: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-K5DhxXxJZbdHJldTjekhFZlk/view>

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## Delaware

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | SOB exclusion | Criminal penalties | 7am-9pm hours restriction*

#### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full establishment licensure required under Chapter 53 of Title 24. Each establishment must have a 'professional-in-charge' — a Delaware-licensed massage therapist or certified massage technician. Hours of operation strictly limited to 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Floor plan, ownership disclosure (including corporate shareholders), and current staff roster with license numbers required. Dormitory use prohibited. Windows fronting public areas cannot be blocked. All internal and external doors must remain unlocked during operating hours (with limited exceptions).

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to any place of business offering massage or bodywork. SOBs explicitly excluded from licensure. LMTs cannot work in an unlicensed establishment. One professional-in-charge may supervise only one establishment at a time. Sole practitioner home offices and outcall locations not owned by the therapist are exempt.

#### 3. What do the penalties look like?

SOBs cannot obtain an establishment license. Operating outside the 7am-9pm hours is subject to criminal penalty. Dormitory prohibition and window visibility rules are direct anti-trafficking measures. License voided on sale or name change. [VERIFY: specific civil fine schedule]

#### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Delaware board enforcement data since establishment licensing was enacted. Have any licenses been denied based on SOB classification?]

#### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Delaware's hours restrictions, window visibility rules, and dormitory prohibition are among the most operationally specific in the country. Survey Delaware LMTs on how these requirements affect legitimate practices.

## Florida

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | Background check | SOB exclusion | Criminal penalties | HT training required*

### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full licensure required under s. 480.043. Background screening mandatory for all establishment owners. For corporations with more than \$250,000 in Florida assets, background screening required for owner, designated establishment manager, AND each individual directly involved in management. Human trafficking awareness training and posting required by January 1, 2021. Designated establishment manager required at all times. Operating between midnight and 5 a.m. is prohibited (with limited exceptions). No use of premises as primary residence.

### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage establishments. Physician offices employing LMTs are exempt. License non-transferable between persons. No exemption for sole practitioners. Corporate entities face heightened scrutiny.

### 3. What do the penalties look like?

Mandatory license denial if owner or manager convicted of trafficking, prostitution, kidnapping, sexual battery, or related felonies. Operating midnight-5 a.m. = first-degree misdemeanor. Second offense = third-degree felony. License summary suspension for loss of designated manager.

### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

Florida has one of the most active enforcement environments. [VERIFY: pull DBPR annual enforcement reports for establishment license denials, revocations, and citations since 2019 amendments.]

### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Florida LMTs have been the most vocal nationally on both the burden and benefit of establishment licensing. Highest-priority state for survey research.

Source: [https://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL;=0400-0499/0480/Sections/0480.043.html](https://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL;=0400-0499/0480/Sections/0480.043.html)

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## Hawaii

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | SOB exclusion | LMT on premises required | No door locks*

### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full licensure required for both establishments and out-call massage services. A principal massage therapist must be designated and recorded with the board. If the principal MT leaves, the establishment has 10 days to name a replacement; after 15 days, the license is automatically suspended. A licensed MT must be physically on premises at all times during operation. NO LOCKS on massage room doors. All establishments may be inspected at any time during business hours.

### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all establishments and out-call massage services. Establishment may be charged separately from individual therapists for violations. Establishment is liable for all lascivious conduct, lewdness, or sexual acts on premises. Rest quarters for employees may not be used for massage purposes. License is non-transferable.

### 3. What do the penalties look like?

Automatic license suspension if principal MT not replaced within 15 days. The 'no locks' rule and 'MT on premises at all times' requirement are direct operational safeguards against trafficking scenarios. [VERIFY: specific fine schedule from Hawaii board rules]

#### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Hawaii board annual data on establishment licenses and any enforcement actions. Has the automatic suspension mechanism been triggered?]

#### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Hawaii's 'no locks on massage room doors' is the most notable single provision in any state's establishment law. Survey Hawaii LMTs on whether this rule is enforced and creates practical problems.

Source: [https://cca.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/har\\_84-c2.pdf](https://cca.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/har_84-c2.pdf)

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## Louisiana

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*Full license required | SOB exclusion | Effective August 2025*

#### 1. What does the law actually require?

Establishment licensing law effective August 1, 2025. All locations where one or more persons regularly engage in massage therapy must register with the board. Locations with two or more persons regularly practicing must also pay the establishment license fee. Each LMT at an establishment must hold an LMT-ID Card. Establishments must employ or contract only licensed massage therapists. SOB's explicitly excluded.

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all establishments including sole practitioners (register only, fee waived for single practitioners). The entity controlling the physical location is responsible for obtaining the license. Physician offices, PT facilities, chiro offices, and athletic facilities are exempt.

#### 3. What do the penalties look like?

[VERIFY: Louisiana penalty schedule for failing to register, for employing unlicensed practitioners, or for operating as a SOB. Law is new as of August 2025 — enforcement infrastructure may still be developing.]

#### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

Law became effective August 1, 2025 — less than a year old. [VERIFY: early implementation data from Louisiana Board of Massage Therapy.]

#### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Louisiana LMTs are living through the first year of implementation. Critical window for primary research on what barriers and benefits look like in real time.

Source: [https://www.labmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/lawsfromstatelegis.la\\_goveffective8.1.2025.pdf](https://www.labmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/lawsfromstatelegis.la_goveffective8.1.2025.pdf)

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## Massachusetts

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | SOB exclusion | Compliance plan required | Inspection before license*

#### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full licensure required under 269 CMR 6.00. Two tiers: Solo Establishment License and Multiple Therapists Establishment License. Multiple-therapist establishments must designate a compliance officer (licensed LMT) AND maintain a written compliance plan. Board must inspect before issuing any license. Annual renewal required. Failure to obtain an establishment license constitutes unlicensed practice. Use of aliases by LMTs is prohibited.

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage therapy establishments including sole practitioners. Owner does NOT need to be a licensed LMT. Board investigates all owners holding 5%+ interest for suitability. Massage prohibited in adult entertainment venues, bars, and nightclubs. Chair massage-only locations are exempt.

### 3. What do the penalties look like?

Failure to obtain establishment license = unlicensed practice. License denial based on criminal history of any owner with 5%+ interest. Board may discipline establishment if any associated person facilitates or permits illicit behavior. [VERIFY: specific civil fine amounts]

### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Massachusetts Board annual inspection data, establishment license counts, and enforcement actions.]

### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Massachusetts has among the most detailed compliance plan requirements. Survey multi-therapist establishment owners on administrative burden versus benefit.

Source: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/269-cmr-6-facility-licensure/download>

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## Mississippi

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*Annual registration | License verification required | \$500-\$1,000 fine per violation*

### 1. What does the law actually require?

Annual registration required since July 1, 2021. Establishment must verify and display current licenses of all LMTs practicing on premises. All advertising must include current license numbers of every LMT (establishments with 6+ LMTs are exempt from this advertising requirement if services are performed by licensed persons). Client records retained for 2 years.

### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage establishments. Establishment is responsible for verifying every practitioner's license. A massage therapist may not be discriminated against by cities or municipalities in obtaining business licenses.

### 3. What do the penalties look like?

Civil fine of \$500-\$1,000 per offense for failure to verify or display practitioner licenses. Follow-up inspections at board discretion. [VERIFY: additional penalties for operating unregistered or allowing unlicensed practice?]

### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Mississippi board enforcement data since July 2021. How many fines have been assessed? How many inspections conducted?]

### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Mississippi's requirements are relatively light. Survey LMTs on whether annual registration has had any meaningful impact.

Source: [https://www.msmbt.ms.gov/sites/msbmt/files/MSBMT.Rules\\_Clean\\_2.27.2026.pdf](https://www.msmbt.ms.gov/sites/msbmt/files/MSBMT.Rules_Clean_2.27.2026.pdf)

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## Missouri

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | FBI background check | Pre-license inspection required | Photo display required*

### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full business license required under 20 CSR 2197-5.010 and 5.020. Application requires: completed notarized application and fee, fingerprint background check conducted by the Missouri State Highway Patrol AND the FBI, proof of general liability insurance for the business location, and names and addresses of all owners regardless of business structure. A survey inspection must be completed with no violations on file with the board BEFORE a license is issued. Board may conduct survey inspections during business hours at any time. Businesses must: employ only licensed or provisionally licensed massage therapists; display the business license and each therapist's original license with a photo

taken within the last two years conspicuously; maintain client records for at least 3 years; maintain general liability insurance; keep massage area used exclusively for massage or clinical purposes; and meet detailed sanitation standards for all equipment, linens, and products.

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage therapy businesses. Owner must be at least 18 years of age. All owners — whether sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, or corporation — must be named on the application. No unlicensed employees, staff, or independent contractors may provide massage. When a business is sold or ownership is transferred, the new owner must submit a new application, fee, inspection, AND a new FBI/State Highway Patrol background check. Name changes require 15 days advance notice to the board. Location changes require a new application, fee, and inspection at the new location.

#### 3. What do the penalties look like?

FBI and Missouri State Highway Patrol fingerprint background check required at initial application and again upon any change of ownership — one of the most rigorous background check requirements in the country. Survey inspection with no violations required before license is issued. Board provides written inspection report listing every violation with the specific statute or rule allegedly violated. Business owner or manager must submit a written plan of correction within 30 days. [VERIFY: specific civil fine or criminal penalty schedule for operating without a license or for failing to correct violations]

#### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

Law originally enacted 2000, significantly amended effective February 29, 2020. The 2020 amendment added the FBI background check requirement and tightened ownership transfer requirements. [VERIFY: Missouri Board of Therapeutic Massage annual enforcement data since 2020 — license counts, inspection failures, and background check denials]

#### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Missouri's FBI background check requirement on every ownership transfer is one of the strongest anti-revolving-door provisions in any state. Survey Missouri LMTs on whether this has made it harder for bad actors to reopen under new names after closure.

Source: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/adrules/csr/current/20csr/20c2197-5.pdf>

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## Nebraska

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*Full license required | Mobile establishment license available*

#### 1. What does the law actually require?

Full establishment licensure required. Statute defines 'massage therapy establishment' to include mobile establishments. Application requires: names of licensed LMTs who will work there, floor plan with restroom locations, completed self-inspection report, and a statement about prior operation at that address. Extensive facility standards covering lighting, ventilation, running water, disinfection, storage, linens, and prohibited activities. Renewal every odd-numbered year on November 1.

#### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage therapy establishments. Mobile massage therapy establishments are separately licensable — a notable gap-filler other states miss. Exemptions include: on-site massage at client's location, stand-alone customer-operated massage chairs, establishments within hospitals/nursing homes, and corporate massage events.

#### 3. What do the penalties look like?

[VERIFY: Nebraska DHHS penalty schedule for operating without establishment license or for violations of facility standards]

#### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Nebraska DHHS establishment license count data and any enforcement actions since licensing was implemented]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Nebraska's mobile establishment license is the most practical accommodation for mobile LMTs. Survey Nebraska LMTs on whether the mobile license has been useful.

Source: <https://rules.nebraska.gov/rules?agencyId=37&titleId=101>

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## Nevada

MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Annual certificate of operation | Covers reflexology and structural integration

1. What does the law actually require?

Certificate of operation required annually under NAC 640C.083. Applies to massage establishments, reflexology establishments, and structural integration establishments. Certificate valid for one year. Certificate holder must file current establishment address with board and notify board within 10 days of any address change. Extensive facility standards covering sanitation, equipment, room requirements, linens, clothing, water supply, and waste disposal. Rooms used for massage may not simultaneously be used for domestic purposes.

2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage, reflexology, and structural integration establishments. [VERIFY: sole practitioner exemptions in Nevada]

3. What do the penalties look like?

[VERIFY: Nevada penalty schedule for operating without a certificate of operation]

4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Nevada Board of Massage Therapy data on certificates of operation issued and enforcement actions]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Nevada's inclusion of reflexology and structural integration in the same certificate framework is unique. Survey Nevada LMTs on whether the annual renewal cycle is burdensome.

Source: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/nac/NAC-640C.html>

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## New Jersey

MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Employer registration | Background check | Mandatory revocation for unlicensed employees

1. What does the law actually require?

Employer registration (not full establishment licensure) required under N.J.A.C. 13:37A-6.1. Any individual or entity that employs another person to provide massage and bodywork services must register with the board. Registration requires: owner/operator name and residence, primary business location, certification that only licensed MTs will be employed, criminal history background of owner/operator, and the registration fee. Registration valid for two years.

2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to employers only — sole practitioners practicing alone are not required to register. Schools and licensed healthcare institutions exempt. Owner does not need to be an LMT. Registration is mandatorily revoked if false information was submitted OR if any unlicensed employee provides massage services.

3. What do the penalties look like?

Mandatory suspension or revocation if any employee providing massage services is unlicensed. Failure to report changes within 10 days = professional misconduct. [VERIFY: specific civil fine amounts and criminal penalties for

employers who knowingly employ unlicensed practitioners]

4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: New Jersey board data on employer registrations, revocations, and enforcement actions. Has the mandatory revocation for unlicensed employees been used?]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] New Jersey calls this 'employer registration' rather than 'establishment licensing' — a meaningful distinction. Survey NJ LMTs on whether registration has improved the professional environment.

Source: <https://regulations.justia.com/states/new-jersey/title-13/chapter-37a/subchapter-6/section-13-37a-6-1/>

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## New York

*BILL/UNKNOWN — NOT YET ENACTED OR UNCLEAR*

*Individual LMT licensing: YES | Establishment licensing: BILL ONLY — NOT PASSED | SOB exclusion proposed*

1. What does the law actually require?

**IMPORTANT: New York licenses individual massage therapists under Article 155 of the Education Law but has NO establishment licensing law. S2643 was introduced in the Senate on January 22, 2025 by Sen. Addabbo and committed to the Committee on Consumer Protection. A companion Assembly bill, A7564, was introduced April 1, 2025 by M. of A. Weprin and referred to the Committee on Economic Development. As of July 2026, neither bill has passed. Both remain in committee in the 2025-2026 legislative session. If enacted, S2643 would create Article 30-C requiring annual licensure for all massage therapy establishments, a designated compliance officer (licensed LMT, full-time on premises), and a written compliance plan.**

2. Who bears the burden?

If enacted: Applies to all establishments. Owner need not be an LMT. Exemptions for facilities owned by licensed healthcare professionals, board-approved CE programs/student clinics, and chair massage-only locations. Massage therapy explicitly prohibited in adult entertainment venues offering sexual services, bars/nightclubs, streets/sidewalks (with event exception), and salons where nail/hair removal is 75%+ of business.

3. What do the penalties look like?

If enacted: Inspections without prior notice at any time during business hours. Penalty provisions not specified in bill text — confirm whether fines or criminal penalties were added in committee or a later version before publication.

4. What has changed since the law passed?

New York has individual massage therapist licensing under Article 155 of the Education Law but NO establishment licensing law as of July 2026. S2643 and companion A7564 are in committee. Monitor [nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S2643](https://nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S2643) for status updates.

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] New York is the state with the most extensively documented abuse of unlicensed massage statutes against trafficking victims (see the Un-Licensed report, YWCA NYC). Any establishment licensing law here will face significant civil rights scrutiny. Survey NY LMTs on what they actually need from a licensing framework.

Source: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S2643>

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## North Carolina

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | Fingerprint background check | Sole practitioners EXEMPT*

1. What does the law actually require?

Full establishment licensure required under G.S. 90-632.10. Application requires: applicable fee, proof of property damage and bodily injury liability insurance, prior licensure and disciplinary history from all NC health licensing boards, fingerprint cards for criminal history check by NC Department of Public Safety, full ownership information, proof of good moral character, signature of all owners, completed self-evaluation inspection report, and proof that the establishment employs or plans to employ at least one licensed MT.

**2. Who bears the burden?**

Applies to all establishments employing or planning to employ massage and bodywork therapists. **SOLE PRACTITIONERS ARE EXPLICITLY EXEMPT.** This targets multi-therapist businesses, not individual practitioners. Chiropractor offices providing massage by licensed NC therapists are exempt. Student clinics at accredited programs are exempt.

**3. What do the penalties look like?**

Criminal history background check (fingerprints) required at application. 'Proof of good moral character' required. [VERIFY: grounds for denial based on criminal history; penalties for operating without establishment license]

**4. What has changed since the law passed?**

[VERIFY: NC Board of Massage and Bodywork Therapy establishment license data since enactment. How many applications have been filed, approved, and denied?]

**5. What do LMTs in that state say?**

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] NC's sole practitioner exemption means most individual LMTs are unaffected. Survey multi-therapist establishment owners on the fingerprint/criminal history check requirement.

Source: <https://www.bmbt.org/downloads/Practice%20Act%20With%20Revisions%207-21.pdf>

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## North Dakota

*LIMITED — LOCAL/OPT-IN OR STANDARDS ONLY*

*Standards only | No establishment license identified*

**1. What does the law actually require?**

North Dakota has establishment standards under Chapter 49-03-01 but no standalone establishment license requirement was identified in source documents. Standards require: safe/clean/sanitary conditions, adequate hot and cold running water, restroom on premises, no smoking in massage area, proper draping for client privacy, clean and disinfected tools and linens, and no alcohol provided in massage area.

**2. Who bears the burden?**

[VERIFY: Does North Dakota require an establishment license, registration, or permit separate from an individual LMT license? Source document contains only sanitation standards — no licensing framework identified.]

**3. What do the penalties look like?**

[VERIFY: What are the enforcement mechanisms for North Dakota establishment standards? Who inspects? What are the penalties for non-compliance?]

**4. What has changed since the law passed?**

[VERIFY: North Dakota Board of Massage enforcement history and whether establishment standards have ever been enforced]

**5. What do LMTs in that state say?**

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] If North Dakota has only standards but no license, it may represent the weakest possible regulatory model. Survey ND LMTs on whether the standards are meaningful.

Source: <https://ndlegis.gov/information/acdata/pdf/49-03-01.pdf>

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## Ohio

LIMITED — LOCAL/OPT-IN OR STANDARDS ONLY

Township-level only | Opt-in by township resolution | Background check (if township adopts)

### 1. What does the law actually require?

Ohio's establishment regulation is opt-in at the township level under ORS 503.41-503.49. A board of township trustees may, by resolution, require registration of massage establishments and their employees within unincorporated township territory. If a township adopts a resolution: no person may operate without a township permit (\$250 initial fee, \$125 annual renewal); health and safety inspection required; criminal history investigation required; full ownership disclosure required. This framework does NOT apply to incorporated cities or counties unless they adopt similar ordinances.

### 2. Who bears the burden?

Only applies in townships that have affirmatively adopted a resolution. No statewide establishment licensing. Township permits regulate both establishments AND employees. Explicit prohibitions: no unlicensed employees, no operation during prohibited hours, no employees under 18, no sexual contact or genital touching, no revealing clothing.

### 3. What do the penalties look like?

Criminal history investigation required for permit applications in adopting townships. Operating without permit, employing unlicensed persons, or refusing inspection are all violations. [VERIFY: civil and criminal penalty schedule for Ohio township permit violations]

### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: How many Ohio townships have adopted massage establishment ordinances under 503.41? Is there any statewide tracking?]

### 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Ohio's patchwork system creates dramatically uneven protection depending entirely on whether your township passed a resolution. Survey Ohio LMTs in both regulated and unregulated areas.

Source: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-503.41>

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## Oregon

STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH

Full facility permit required | Criminal penalties | Felony on repeat offense | Mandatory DA referral

### 1. What does the law actually require?

Facility permit required under ORS 687.021 and 687.059. No person may operate a massage facility without a board permit, except an individual LMT working out of their own home. The word 'massage' cannot appear in a business name or advertising without a license or permit. Facility may only provide massage through licensed LMTs. Criminal penalties under ORS 687.991: first violation = Class A misdemeanor; if person has a PRIOR CONVICTION for the same violation = Class C felony. Board must report cases warranting criminal prosecution to the district attorney.

### 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage facilities. Individual LMTs working from their own home are exempt. Facility is responsible for the conduct and behavior of all employees and contracted agents. Prior board discipline of the facility, its owners, or members may be grounds for permit denial.

### 3. What do the penalties look like?

ESCALATING CRIMINAL PENALTY: First offense = Class A misdemeanor. Second offense after prior conviction = Class C felony. Civil penalty cap: \$1,000 per violation. Board actively required to refer criminal cases to district attorneys. One of the clearest civil-to-criminal escalation structures in the country.

### 4. What has changed since the law passed?

Oregon's repeat-offender felony escalation is the most significant enforcement tool in this dataset. [VERIFY: Has ORS 687.991(1)(b) ever been applied? Pull Oregon Board of Massage Therapists annual reports for enforcement data.]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Oregon's model — facility permit + criminal escalation + mandatory DA referral — is the most complete integration of civil and criminal enforcement in any state. Survey Oregon LMTs on whether this framework has improved the professional environment.

Source: [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors687.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors687.html)

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## South Carolina

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*Full license required | Sole practitioners included | Effective May 2023*

1. What does the law actually require?

Establishment licensure required effective May 13, 2023 under Section 40-30-113. Two categories: massage therapy establishment and sole practitioner establishment. Application requires: completed form with fees for each location, name/address/phone of each owner, and physical/mailling address of the premises. The establishment must be organized or registered under applicable South Carolina law as a legal entity. A pre-licensing inspection by the department is required before a license is issued.

2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage therapy establishments AND sole practitioners (who must obtain a 'sole practitioner establishment' license — a notably inclusive approach). Entity must be registered under SC law. Pre-licensing inspection required at each location.

3. What do the penalties look like?

[VERIFY: South Carolina penalty schedule for operating without an establishment license, failing a pre-licensing inspection, or other violations.]

4. What has changed since the law passed?

Law effective May 13, 2023 — approximately two years old. [VERIFY: SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation data on establishment licenses issued, inspection outcomes, and enforcement actions since 2023]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] SC's requirement that sole practitioners obtain an establishment license is unusual. Survey SC LMTs — particularly solo practitioners — on the impact of the sole practitioner establishment license.

Source: <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t40c030.php>

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## Tennessee

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | Background check | Automatic disqualifier for prostitution conviction | Good moral character required*

1. What does the law actually require?

Full establishment licensure required. Establishment owners and 'responsible persons' are directly accountable for compliance. Requirements include: criminal background check, proof of immigration status for non-citizens, evidence of good moral character (two original signed letters within preceding 12 months), education in Tennessee massage therapy law if applicant is not a licensed LMT, disclosure of any prior criminal conviction, and corporate charter if a corporation. Application must be sworn and notarized. Establishment must maintain a list of all individuals who provided massage in the preceding two years.

2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage therapy establishments. The responsible person need not be a licensed LMT, but all persons performing massage must be licensed. Criminal history: conviction for prostitution or sexual misconduct is an AUTOMATIC disqualifier. Felony conviction under Tennessee law MAY disqualify an applicant (board discretion). Inspections are initial and periodic, announced or unannounced.

3. What do the penalties look like?

Automatic disqualification for conviction of prostitution or sexual misconduct offenses — one of the strongest automatic bars in any state. Felony conviction is discretionary disqualification. Reinspection fee for failed inspections. Failure to allow inspection = deemed failed inspection.

4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Tennessee Health Related Boards data on establishment license applications, denials based on criminal history, and inspections since implementation]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Tennessee's 'good moral character' letters requirement and automatic disqualification for prostitution convictions are unique. Survey Tennessee LMTs on whether these requirements are administered consistently.

Source: <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules/0870/0870-01.20170817.pdf>

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## Texas

*STRONG — FULL LICENSURE WITH ENFORCEMENT TEETH*

*Full license required | Fingerprint background check | SOB exclusion | Criminal penalties | No residency on premises*

1. What does the law actually require?

Full establishment licensure required under Chapter 455 of the Texas Occupations Code. SOBs explicitly prohibited from obtaining a license or operating as a massage establishment. Fingerprint-based criminal history background check required for all applicants, including: any person holding 10%+ of entity stock, persons with controlling interest, directors/officers, and general managers. Establishment may ONLY employ licensed massage therapists. Comprehensive prohibitions: no unauthorized workers, no minors without parental consent, no nude employees providing services, no sexual contact of any kind (broadly defined), no one residing on premises.

2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage establishments. SOBs explicitly excluded. Solo practitioners meeting certain conditions are exempt from establishment licensing. Extensive and specific definition of prohibited sexual contact covers touching, offers, agreements, kissing without consent, inappropriate comments, and any behavior reasonably interpreted as seductive.

3. What do the penalties look like?

Operating as an unlicensed establishment: escalating criminal penalties escalating to state jail felony on repeated violations. SOBs operating as massage establishments face the same escalation. Fingerprint background check + SOB exclusion + criminal escalation makes Texas one of the strongest enforcement frameworks nationally.

4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Texas TDLR data on establishment licenses issued, denied, and revoked. Pull TDLR enforcement reports for post-licensing data.]

5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Texas is ground zero for the national conversation about illicit sex businesses disguised as massage. Survey Texas LMTs on whether the comprehensive establishment law has improved professional standing.

Source: <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/?tab=1&code;=OC&chapter;=OC.455>

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# Utah

*MODERATE — REGISTRATION OR PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*Registration required | Background check | No ATMs on premises | HT disclosure posting required | No cameras in treatment rooms*

## 1. What does the law actually require?

Registration required under Title 58, Chapter 47b. Application requires a signed attestation from the owner that facilities comply with required standards. Establishment must maintain accurate records of all employees and contracted personnel including name, license classification, license number, expiration date, and a recent color photograph. Must post the Division's Massage Disclosure form (complaint procedures, client rights, law enforcement contacts, and human trafficking resources) in the entryway and each restroom. Registration is non-transferable and expires immediately upon any transfer or assignment.

## 2. Who bears the burden?

Applies to all massage establishments. Background check required. Camera prohibition: no cameras in practice rooms, restrooms, or disrobing areas. No ATMs on premises. Each client must have a private space to disrobe and receive massage services.

## 3. What do the penalties look like?

Registration expires immediately upon transfer. Required human trafficking disclosure posting is a notable consumer protection provision. Camera prohibition and ATM prohibition are direct anti-exploitation measures. [VERIFY: specific civil and criminal penalty provisions for Utah establishment violations]

## 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Utah Division of Professional Licensing data on massage establishment registrations and enforcement. See: [commerce.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/strengthening-trust-in-utah-massage-establishments.pdf](https://commerce.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/strengthening-trust-in-utah-massage-establishments.pdf)]

## 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Utah's ATM prohibition and camera prohibition are among the most operationally targeted anti-exploitation provisions. Survey Utah LMTs on whether these provisions are meaningful or burdensome.

Source: <https://adminrules.utah.gov/public/rule/R156-47b/Current%20Rules>

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# Vermont

*LIMITED — LOCAL/OPT-IN OR STANDARDS ONLY*

*Designee required | Complaint-triggered inspection only*

## 1. What does the law actually require?

Under 26 V.S.A. § 5423, an establishment must designate a massage therapist, bodyworker, or touch professional to be responsible for ensuring the establishment complies with Chapter 105 and Director rules. A person authorized by the Director may enter any establishment for inspection — but ONLY when a complaint has been filed regarding the practice of massage or bodywork at that establishment. No fee may be charged for the inspection. [VERIFY: Does Vermont require an establishment license or permit separate from individual licensure?]

## 2. Who bears the burden?

[VERIFY: Who in Vermont is required to designate a compliance responsible person? What are the consequences of failing to designate a responsible person?]

## 3. What do the penalties look like?

[VERIFY: Vermont penalty provisions for failure to designate a responsible person or failure to allow inspection. Complaint-triggered inspection suggests very limited proactive enforcement authority.]

## 4. What has changed since the law passed?

[VERIFY: Vermont Office of Professional Regulation data on massage establishment complaints and inspections]

## 5. What do LMTs in that state say?

[PRIMARY RESEARCH NEEDED] Vermont's complaint-triggered inspection model represents one of the most minimal regulatory frameworks. Survey Vermont LMTs on whether this is adequate.

Source: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/26/105>

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Source data: state statutes, administrative codes, and board rules as cited under each state entry. Compiled for the Massage Therapist's Toolkit, 2nd Edition by Julie Onofrio, LMT. Not legal advice.

For the most current list of states with establishment licensing laws, visit:  
[lookbeforeyoubookamassage.com/massage-establishment-licensing-in-the-us](http://lookbeforeyoubookamassage.com/massage-establishment-licensing-in-the-us)