

Examining Reasons for License Non-Compliance among Asian-Pacific Islander Community Members: Project for Oregon Board of Massage Therapists

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to improve professional connections with the Asian-Pacific Islander (API) community of massage practitioners in Oregon, the Oregon Board of Massage Therapists (OBMT) commissioned the Center for Public Service (CPS) at Portland State University to conduct a study to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify any barriers that hinder licensing of Asian-Pacific Islander community members who practice massage
2. To recommend ways to make massage education and licensing processes more culturally responsive to API massage practitioners' needs

Data Collection and Analysis

During September through December 2014, CPS assembled a multicultural project team and obtained approval from the Portland State University (PSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct interviews.

- 23 interviews were conducted during November 2014 and February 2015.
- 22 interviews were conducted in a language other than English.

Interview notes were transcribed. The interview results were then coded and analyzed, and key themes were identified. In March 2015, data analysis was completed and recommendations were developed.

Key Findings

I. General Background of the API Massage Practitioners

- Most of the API massage practitioners are first generation immigrants who came to the United States hoping to make a better living. Some came to the United States to reunite with family.
- Their overall educational level is not high.
- Many have some massage training from their home country.
- When they first came to the United States most of them were not eligible to work because of their immigration status.

II. Where and How API Massage Practitioners Work

- Some provide licensed or unlicensed massage at massage facilities.
- Some choose to work at non-massage facilities, such as nail salons, foot spas, and reflexology businesses without being licensed.
- Some provide massage as private practitioners in their own home or the client's home. Most of these private practitioners were unlicensed.
- Some massage practitioners considered massage to be a part-time or temporary job. Some, however, continued to provide massage even after they found a permanent job. Massage became a supplemental job on their days off, or when clients called them for service. Both licensed and unlicensed massage practitioners fit some of these characteristics.

III. The API Massage Practitioners' Perspectives on Licensing

- Most of the practitioners did not know about licensing requirements before coming to the United States.
- Many learned about licensing requirements through friends and colleagues. The information they obtained might not have been accurate.
- Many perceived the licensing process to be too difficult, costly, and time consuming.
- After learning about the licensing process, some obtained a license, some worked without a license at a non-massage facility (nail salon, foot spa, reflexology business), and some practiced unlicensed massage at a massage facility or their own home.

IV. Key reasons for practicing massage without a license

- Many practitioners had difficulty understanding the licensing process.
- Many lacked sufficient English proficiency to pass the examination.
- Some lacked financial resources for licensing.
- Some did not want to invest the time necessary to prepare for the examination.
- Some lacked sufficient education to master the content for the examination.
- Some were concerned about their immigration status.
- Some did not consider massage therapy to be a professional occupation that warrants licensing.
- Some practiced massage as a temporary or supplementary job and did not feel that licensing was worthwhile under the circumstances.
- Some thought they were capable of providing massage responsibly, and did not see the need to be licensed.
- Employers and clients hire unlicensed massage practitioners.

Recommendations

I. Improve dissemination of information about licensing requirements

- A) Provide licensing information in multiple languages.
- B) Reach out to API massage practitioner communities.
- C) Educate massage clients about licensure requirements.

II. Provide educational support for massage therapist training.

- A) Develop scholarship-type program for the massage therapist training.
- B) Develop internship program for the massage therapist training.
- C) Develop multi-language massage therapist training program.

III. Improve accessibility for licensure examination.

- A) Provide multi-language support for the examination.
- B) Provide multi-layer licensure qualifications.

IV. Enforce licensure requirements in a consistent and equitable manner.

V. Develop trust and relationship with the community.