

# Competencies for Hospital Based Massage Therapy

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## Introduction

Hospital Based Massage Therapy (HBMT) specific competencies define what a massage therapist (MT) should know and be able to do to practice responsibly in a hospital setting.

An increasing number of hospitals are offering Integrative Health and Medicine (IHM) services, and a survey conducted by Health Forum found that massage therapy is the second most popular IHM service behind pet therapy in inpatient settings (American Hospital Association, 2007).

The hospital environment differs vastly from other massage practice locations such as private offices, spas, and sports clubs. The variety of conditions encountered in an acute care setting requires a level of knowledge in pathophysiology and the ability to adapt massage protocols appropriately.

The Academic Collaborative for Integrative Health (ACIH) created the Hospital Based Massage Therapy Task Force (HBMT-TF) to determine if there is a need for standard competencies for hospital based massage therapy and, if indicated, to develop a peer reviewed set of competencies which could be useful to hospitals, massage therapy schools and massage therapists.

The resultant HBMT specific competencies build on the ACIH Competencies for Optimal Practice in Integrated Environments (<https://integrativehealth.org/competencies-integrated-practices/>).

## Methods

- A survey was created to assess various elements of massage therapy programs such as educational/experience requirements, employment model, orientation, and supervision.
- Thirty-two out of 37 hospitals completed the survey, resulting in an 87 percent response rate.
- A Delphi technique engaged survey participants and other experts to shape the final version of the competencies.
- As these competencies are shared with hospitals, massage therapists, and massage schools, the Task Force members expect that additional development of the competencies will take place as various groups implement them.



## Contact Us

Contact us for the full report and the HBMT specific competencies.

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## The Competencies

The HBMT specific competencies may help with hiring, working with, and evaluating MT staff in hospitals as well as serve as guidelines for curriculum development for massage schools and CE providers.

### Competency 1: Hospital Environment

Work with patients, families, staff, and individuals of other professions to maintain a climate of mutual respect, shared values and safety within a hospital environment. The specific competencies include values and ethics, charting, medical terminology, communication with hospital staff, evidence informed decision making, roles and responsibilities, necessary credentialing, and the concept of informed consent.

### Competency 2: Massage Protocols

Demonstrate understanding of massage protocols within a hospital environment. This competency focuses on understanding medical conditions and appropriately adjusting massage protocols as well as understanding indications, contraindications, and precautions. Also included is the ability to work around medical equipment, demonstrating correct body mechanics, and recognizing one's limitations in this environment.

### Competency 3: Therapeutic Presence

Demonstrate therapeutic presence within a hospital environment. This competency focuses on communicating with confidence, clarity and respect; recognizing how one contributes to the working relationships; identify signs of patient stress, anxiety, pain, grief and/or trauma; describe appropriate boundaries, and maintaining self-care practices.