



## **Massage Licensing: Frequently Asked Questions San Francisco Department of Public Health, Environmental Health**

### **What do I need to do in order to open a massage establishment?**

Before applying for a permit with the Health Department look through the structural requirements for a massage establishment prior to looking at possible locations. Once you have a couple of possible locations, then you should go to City Planning at 1660 Mission Street to determine if zoning will allow your proposed type of use. Besides the use, you may want to ask the City Planning representative about the location within the building you are thinking of leasing. There may be some issues with handicap accessibility if there isn't an elevator in the multiple floored building or if the restroom facilities are not handicapped accessible.

When those issues (or non-issues) are dealt with, then you are ready to apply for an establishment permit with the Health Department. There are two (2) types of "fixed location" establishment permits. You could have either a General Massage Establishment or Solo Practitioner Massage Establishment permit. The differences between the two are that:

- Solo practitioner massage establishment permit - requires that you have an Advanced Practitioner's permit. Allows you to have only 2-4 other advanced practitioners and 1 or more health or healing arts practitioner(s) at your location.
- General massage establishment permit- does not require you to be a practitioner. Allows for you to have multiple practitioners.

### **I don't own a store, but I know how to massage. How do I get a permit?**

If you are going to be or are already working for a permitted establishment, then you need only obtain a Practitioner's permit, either General or Advanced. This allows you to work at any permitted establishment or permitted outcall massage service.

### **Do the hours of operation – 7 AM to 12 midnight – apply to the Outcall Massage Services as well?**

Yes, per Section 1918(b), "No massage establishment, solo practitioner massage establishment, or outcall massage service shall operate or provide massage services during the hours between midnight and 7:00 am.

### **Is there a background check required on each partner in a partnership or each >10% shareholder in a corporation?**

Yes, per Section 1909(d), "The same permit and criminal history information required of individual applicants shall be provided for each officer, director, and stockholder holding >10% of stock of the corporation, or for each partner, including limited partners."

**Are Solo Practitioners required to have the same structural requirements for self-closing toilet room doors and separate changing room for employees?**

Per Section 1911, toilet facilities and designated changing & clothes storage area shall be provided for patrons. However, there isn't a specification as to the employees' bathroom and/or changing area. As a common practice, your private area for changing and washing hands should be separate from your patrons' toilet room.

**What kinds of permits do I need to get if I conduct chair massages at my leased space and at a patron's office or home, flea market, farmer's market, or weekend festival?**

You will need at least 2 and maybe 3 - 4 permits to conduct your business at the various locations you've mentioned.

1. FIRST, you'll need either a General or Advanced Practitioner's permit.  
Note: The General Practitioner's permit requires only 100 hours of training. The Advanced Practitioner's permit requires 200 hours of training.
2. SECOND, you'll need to get a massage establishment permit with an outcall massage service permit.  
Note: If you are an Advanced Practitioner, you can apply for the Solo Practitioner establishment permit. The advantage to you is that you can perform Outcall Massage Services without having to obtain and pay for a separate permit.
3. THIRD, along with all of the permits noted above, you'll need to get a special event permit from us for your booth at each special event. If you are at a farmers' market, flea market, Bart station, or street, then you'll need to get a letter from the correct authority stating that it's okay for your booth to be set up at that location.

**What happens if a Solo Practitioner with more than one practitioner working under the permit and the holder of the permit leaves? Is it transferable?**

The permit is not transferable. One of the practitioners or the remaining practitioner would need to apply for his or her own Solo Practitioner Massage Establishment permit.

**Will establishments be required to be American Disability Act compliant?**

This question can only be answered by the Department of Building Inspections. You can reach them by phone at (415) 558-6088 or visit and/or write them at Customer Service Division-1st Floor, 1660 Mission Street, 94103.

**If I have an establishment and wish to send staff out as "outcall", do I and each staff member have to apply separately as "outcall masseuse" or could they operate under my establishment permit?**

If your establishment does not currently have an outcall permit, then the practitioners would need to have their own outcall practitioner permits. If your establishment prefers, you can apply for an outcall massage permit that would cover all of your establishment's practitioners.

**I perform massage as a part of my salon practice. It's only about 20% of my business. What do I need to do to continue my business under the new ordinance?**

You will need both a practitioner permit and an establishment permit.

You can apply for the Advance Practitioner permit as long as you have 200 hours or more of training. With an Advance Practitioner permit, you are eligible to apply for the Solo Practitioner Massage Establishment permit. The advantage to having a Solo Practitioner as opposed to a General Massage Establishment permit are the fees are less and the solo practitioner is eligible for outcall without any additional fees.

**I am Nationally Certified as a Massage Therapist. Do I still need to take the exam?**

Yes, you still need to go through the application process and take the massage practitioner exam.

**How long does it take to obtain a massage permit?**

It will take approximately 6-8 weeks.

**If I have a permit from another state, can I use it to practice massage in San Francisco?**

No, you must obtain a massage permit from the San Francisco Health Department to practice massage in San Francisco.

**What is the difference between a General Massage Practitioner Permit and an Advanced Massage Practitioner Permit?**

The only difference is that a General Massage Practitioner Permit requires a minimum of 100 hours of training from a certified massage school while an Advanced Massage Practitioner Permit requires a minimum of 200 hours of training from a certified massage school.

**What if I want a new massage photo ID card?**

You must make an appointment with our office and pay \$25 for a new card.

**How do I renew my massage license?**

When a statement is received from the Tax Collector's Office towards the end of the year, you must pay the yearly license fee either in person at City Hall, Tax Collector's Office, Room 110 or mail in your payment to Tax Collector's Office, P.O. Box 7427, San Francisco, CA 94120. Checks must be made payable to 'San Francisco Tax Collector'.

**What if I fail to pay my yearly massage license fee?**

It is the practitioner's responsibility to pay the yearly massage license fee. In order to keep your massage permit active and valid, you must renew it yearly. Your massage account will become delinquent if you fail to pay the yearly fee. Once an account is declared delinquent it will be closed. If an account is closed, you will need to restart the entire process if you wish to obtain a

massage permit with the San Francisco Health Department. We will not reactivate a delinquent account once it has been closed.

**What if I leave the country, do I have to pay my yearly massage license fee?**

If you wish to keep your permit active and valid, yes you must pay the yearly license fee.

**I had a change of address and never received any bills from the Tax Collector's Office regarding my massage license renewal.**

It is the practitioner's responsibility to update the San Francisco Health Department with any change of address. A massage license must be renewed yearly. For a change of address form, look under the 'Forms and Applications' link.