

## Massage Business: *Do I need a Permit to Operate?* <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/EH/Massage/default.asp>

### 1. What is a Permit to Operate (PTO)?

"Permit" means the document issued by the enforcement agency that authorizes a person, who offers massage for compensation to operate a massage business. The San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) issues a PTO for the legal operation of all Massage Businesses including General Massage Establishments, Sole Practitioner Massage Establishments, and Outcall Massage Service in San Francisco.

### 2. I have my California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC) certificate or SF Massage Practitioner permit (SFMP). Do I still need a permit for my business?

Yes. You are required to obtain a PTO for your massage business. Having a CAMTC certificate or SFMP only allows you to perform massage for compensation but not to operate your own massage business.

### 3. What agencies need to authorize my business?

All massage business locations must be zoned for massage use. It is important that the business owner contacts the <sup>1</sup>Planning Department before signing any lease or rental agreement. All submitted massage business applications are reviewed by DPH's Massage Program staff and require inspections by both the <sup>2</sup>DPH and <sup>3</sup>Fire Departments. The massage business must be registered with the <sup>4</sup>Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector. A background check is also required by the <sup>5</sup>SF Police Department when the business owner does not hold a CAMTC certificate. A PTO is issued once all City Department agencies have reviewed and approved an application.

### 4. How much will the permitting process cost?

All massage businesses must submit a nonrefundable application fee based on the massage business permit type. The fee schedule can be found on the DPH's website.

### 5. How do I know what type of massage business permit I'll need?

There are three (3) massage business permit types depending on your business model. Please review Table 1 on the reverse side of this sheet.

### 6. I am renting a room at a permitted General Massage Establishment. Do I need my own massage business permit?

Yes. You may be required to obtain a Sole Practitioner Establishment permit for your own massage business.

### 7. Where can I get and submit my application for a health permit to operate my massage business?

Permit applications can be obtained online on DPH website at [click here](#) or in person at 49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 600, SF, CA 94103. General Customer Service: Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 7:30 am - 4 pm; Wed 9 am - 4 pm. Plan Review Assistance: Mon-Fri 9 am - 3 pm.

### 8. How much is the annual license fee for my massage business permit?

Your massage business annual license fee is based on the massage business permit type. The fee schedule can be found on the DPH's website.

### 9. I am a licensed chiropractor or licensed acupuncturist. Do I still need a permit?

No. You are exempt from obtaining a massage business permit if you are performing massage within the scope of your profession.

### 10. Is there any fine or penalty if I don't comply with Article 29?

Yes. The Director may impose administrative fines and/or permit penalties in accordance with the provisions of Article 29, section 29.45 for operating without a health permit and any other Article 29 violations.

### 11. How can I get a copy of this Article 29?

Article 29 is accessible via: [Click here](#)

#### Related Agencies:

<sup>1</sup>SF Planning Department  
[Planning Information Center](#)  
49 South Van Ness Avenue  
Permit Center  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Email: [pic@sfgov.org](mailto:pic@sfgov.org)

<sup>4</sup>SF Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector  
SF City Hall, Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place,  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
<https://sftreasurer.org/registration>

SF Department of Building Inspection (DBI)  
49 South Van Ness Avenue (Permit Center)  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(628) 652-3200 - General Information  
Email: [dbicustomerservice@sfgov.org](mailto:dbicustomerservice@sfgov.org)

<sup>3</sup>SF Fire Department  
Bureau of Fire Prevention  
698 2nd Street,  
Room 109  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
<http://sf-fire.org/>

<sup>5</sup>SF Police Department  
Permits Unit  
1245 3rd Street, 5th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94158  
(415) 553-1115  
Email: [sfpdpermits@sfgov.org](mailto:sfpdpermits@sfgov.org)

SF Office of Small Business (OSB)  
SF City Hall, Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place,  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
<https://sfosb.org>

California Massage Therapy Council  
Email: [info@camtc.org](mailto:info@camtc.org)  
Website: <https://www.camtc.org/>

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## MASSAGE BUSINESS PERMIT TYPES:

| <p><b>{1} GENERAL MESSAGE ESTABLISHMENT</b></p>  | <p><b>{2} SOLE PRACTITIONER MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENT</b></p>  | <p><b>{3} OUTCALL MESSAGE SERVICE</b></p>   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have a fixed place of business where you have one (1) or more massage practitioner(s) performing or conducting massage for compensation, excluding yourself.</li> <li>Prior to submitting your DPH permit application, you have confirmed with the Planning Department that the proposed location is <u>eligible</u> for a General Massage Establishment Permit. Note that some zones do not allow for general massage even with a Conditional Use Authorization (CUA).</li> <li>If a CUA application is required and submitted to the Planning Department, you can submit an application for a General Massage Establishment permit with DPH upon approval of the CUA.</li> </ul> <p>There is no limitation in the health code of the number of practitioners you can employ under the General Massage Establishment Permit. However, the Planning Department may have conditions that are set forth in any CUA approval or when massage is an accessory to medical or personal service use.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have a fixed place of business and you are the sole owner of the business.</li> <li>Prior to submitting your DPH application, you have confirmed with the Planning Department that the proposed location is <u>eligible</u> for a Sole Practitioner Massage Establishment Permit.</li> <li>You must have a valid SF Massage Practitioner license OR a current CAMTC issued certificate.</li> <li>You are the only individual who will provide massage for compensation. However, the business location may be shared with <u>one other</u> Sole Practitioner Massage Establishment.</li> <li>You and one other practitioner will each hold your own Sole Practitioner Massage Establishment Permit.</li> <li>The other practitioner shall submit an application with nonrefundable fee to DPH.</li> <li>As Sole Practitioners, NO employees are permitted to work at your establishment.</li> <li>The annual license fee shall be paid by each Sole Practitioner Establishment's Permit holder to maintain a valid permit.</li> </ul> <p>A Sole practitioner permit allows you to</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You do not have a fixed place of business.</li> <li>You provide massage for compensation at locations designated by your client.</li> <li>You CANNOT perform any massage at your own residence.</li> </ul> |

***A business owner, who does not hold a valid CAMTC certificate, is required to complete a background check with SFPD. All submitted fees are nonrefundable.***

