

MT BOK Home page



Welcome to the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Project. This effort has been guided under the direction of the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Stewards. The MTBOK Stewards consist of representatives from the American Massage Therapy Association, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals, Alliance for Massage Therapy Education, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards, Massage Therapy Foundation, and National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork.

[Download the MTBOK Document](#)

Adobe Acrobat Reader required. [Get Reader](#).

[View MTBOK Project Report Webinar](#)

[Send Us Your Comments](#)

Comments and suggestions on the MTBOK are encouraged so that the MTBOK may continue to meet the needs of the profession. To help us understand and evaluate your input, please be as specific as possible and reference the appropriate part of the MTBOK.

A new article highlighting the evolution of the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) project was released March 21, 2011. [Read more](#).

On Saturday, May 15, 2010 the MTBOK Task Force and Stewards announced the release of [Version 1](#) of the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK). The announcement was made at the Highlighting Massage Therapy in CIM Conference in Seattle, Washington. The MTBOK, housed on this site, will continue to grow and evolve to meet the needs of our diverse and dynamic profession. Download the press release regarding this event [here](#)."

[Checklist of MTBOK Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Coverage](#)

[View the MTBOK presentation at the MTF Highlighting Conference](#).

MT BOK FAQs

Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge FAQ's

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What is a Body of Knowledge?

Although there are certainly a variety of definitions, the definition of a Body of Knowledge (BOK) the Steward Group is guided by is "The domain of essential information, mastery over which is the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to practice."

When did work start on the Massage Therapy BOK (MTBOK)?

In January 2007, the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) began hosting a series of four meetings to explore the possibility of the massage therapy profession's leadership organizations working together to develop consensus around definitional and scope issues – what is typically called the Body of Knowledge (BOK) for a profession. This group, initially started by AMTA, was comprised of over a dozen entities that included bodies from the accreditation, certification, education, regulatory, advocacy and research arenas. In July of 2008, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) joined the group along with several organizations representing accreditation and other bodywork, movement and somatic disciplines. Today, key stakeholder organizations have chosen to move forward. The others elected to not participate in subsequent meetings. The groups that elected to discontinue participation have been kept apprised of the group's progress and will have further opportunity for input at a later time.

The continuing participant organizations transitioned into an autonomous Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Stewardship group comprised of representatives from each of the following six organizations: American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), AMTA-Council of Schools, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP), Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB), Massage Therapy Foundation (MTF) and National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB).

Why is establishing the MTBOK important?

The profession is at a key stage in its development. Work done now on the MTBOK will shape the future of massage therapy. The following vision for an initiative to articulate the profession's BOK has emerged from these ongoing discussions:

To develop and adopt across the massage therapy profession **a living resource of competencies, standards and values that inform and guide the domains of practice, licensure, certification, education, accreditation and research.**

Most acknowledged professions have well-articulated foundational understanding of who they are and what they do. To date, the massage therapy profession has yet to establish this in a cohesive manner. A well-articulated body of knowledge will help to drive the recognition and growth of massage therapy. The long-term goal of the participating organizations is to advance the profession through collaborative action around a common definition of the BOK for the massage therapy profession. Many attendant elements of a profession, including education standards, teaching qualifications, and regulatory requirements, stem from a profession's common body of knowledge.

Why are your groups working together?

Our groups are working together because we strongly believe the only way for a valid, comprehensive body of knowledge to be developed and embraced is to represent all stakeholders. Participation by the key stakeholder organizations is critical to achieve that goal.

Did you consider inviting any other organizations to participate?

We did invite other groups from within the massage therapy association, accreditation, certification, regulatory, education, advocacy and research arenas. A couple of these organizations attended early MTBOK meetings and decided it was not worth their ongoing participation because of time or financial constraints, or the feeling they weren't the best fit for the initiative. Several other organizations have agreed to serve as advisors or support future elements of the Body of Knowledge initiative.

How can I get involved in this project?

A task force will be established in mid-2009 to perform the actual compilation and development of the MTBOK. There will be an opportunity to apply for one of the task force volunteer positions. In addition, once the task force is seated and work on the MTBOK has commenced, all massage therapy stakeholders will be asked to comment on the process and progress made. There will be several times throughout our efforts when members of the profession will be asked for their opinions and review of information. We are aware that inclusiveness is critical to making this initiative a success. We are making every effort to be as transparent and inclusive as is possible, to ensure the MTBOK is accepted, recognized, and used as "the standard" for massage therapy across the whole profession as well as with external stakeholders.

Who is funding this work?

The six BOK stewardship group participants are making contributions of monetary support, in-kind resources, or both to support the MTBOK project.

When will the MTBOK work be completed?

The initial emphasis of the MTBOK project is to articulate the foundational elements common to a massage therapy body of knowledge shared by all stakeholders in the profession. The foundational elements of the MTBOK consist of: definition of massage therapy (scope of practice, terminology, describing the field) and definition of the competencies of an entry-level massage therapist, in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's). The work is expected to be completed by mid-2010. Subsequent MTBOK project work is undefined at this point, but it is reasonable to expect follow-on work will continue beyond that date.

How will you involve the entire profession?

Through continued updates via this website, along with comment periods where members of the massage therapy community will have the opportunity to review work to date as well as provide input.

Who will be running this project?

The MTBOK Steward Group will retain ultimate accountability for the success of the initiative. However, a Project Manager will be hired to manage and support the day to day work of the task force.

How will you select task force members?

A task force made up of subject matter experts in the field – practitioners, educators, and researchers will be established to define, develop, and articulate the MTBOK. This group will be selected by members of the MTBOK Stewardship Group. This task force will be seated by July 2009. If you or someone you know is interested in being part of the task force, please return to this website in early March 2009 to review the task force criteria required for submission of interest.

How will you select the project manager?

The Project Manager will be selected by members of the MTBOK Stewardship Group. The candidate selected will ideally be the person who the group feels meets the requirements articulated in the Project Manager Position description, which is posted on this site.

What will you do with this information once it is defined?

The resources developed will be shared broadly with the massage therapy community and all its stakeholders. It is envisioned that the work product will be freely distributed so that any and all stakeholders may utilize it in furthering the development of the massage therapy profession.

What is the process for review and feedback?

The specific process for review and feedback won't be set until the Project Manager and task force members are in place. However, the MTBOK stewards are committed to the values of transparency, openness, and inclusiveness. The expectations set by the Stewards will encourage a collaborative, review-based process for developing the MTBOK.

How can I voice my opinion?

Send your questions or comments to our mtbok@gmail.com e-mail address. Please note that this website and e-mail account is managed by volunteers from the MTBOK Stewardship Group and responses may take a week or so.

MT BOK News

News

March 2011

A new article highlighting the evolution of the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) project was released today on the www.mtbok.org website.

“Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge – Past and Present” highlights the history of the effort, provides a brief overview of the document, and clarifies several themes that have emerged since the release of the first version in May 2010. With the document now in an evaluation phase, the article also calls for the profession to continue to review and submit comments. As a living document it will

develop and evolve over time in response to the needs of the profession. All suggestions and edits are being collected for future revisions through the www.mtbok.org website.

A new video of the MTBOK presentation delivered at the Massage Therapy Foundation's Highlighting Massage Therapy CIM Research conference is also available to view on the www.mtbok.org website. The 40 minute video features the MTBOK project manager and several of the Task Force members sharing details of the history of the project and the process for creating the inaugural document.

To read the article, [click here](#).

To download the document, [click here](#).

To view the video from the Highlighting Conference, [click here](#).

Comments should be sent to mtbok_comments@mtbok.org.

MTBOK Second Draft Released

January 29, 2010

The MTBOK Task Force is pleased to announce the release of the 2nd draft of the MTBOK which is now available for download, review and public comment. The formal commenting period will be open through March 8, 2010.

Download the [press release](#) and [actual content](#) here.

Provide a comment, suggestion or update on the 2nd Draft of the MTBOK via our [online collection form here](#).

Bryan Fong Joins the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Task Force

The MTBOK Project takes great pleasure in announcing the newest member of the MTBOK Task Force, Bryan Fong. Bryan replaces Nancy Schmitt who has been called to other endeavors.

Bryan, a Massage Therapist with more than 12 years experience brings a wealth of experience in Massage and in business management. You can read his brief bio on our website at www.mtbok.org under the section ♦[Who We Are](#)♦ After you have read about him, make a note to come meet us all and hear about the MTBOK project while you give us your input on the first draft which will be released on September 15th. It will be held on Thursday, September 24th from 4:00 to 5:00pm at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, FL. If you are attending the AMTA National Convention, you will be there. If not, you are welcome any way - the session is open to all interested parties. And you can welcome Bryan in person while you are there. I hope to see you there.

[Download Event Flyer for the MTBOK Stakeholder Input Session which was held September 24, 2009 in Orlando,FL](#)

Upcoming Release of the First Draft of the MTBOK

On September 15, 2009 the MTBOK Task Force will release the first draft of the Phase 1 MTBOK for public review and comment. You will be able to review the document here and/or download a pdf version of the document for off-line review. This draft has been put together in just over two months, and although it isn't final, we are driven by the desire to give as many of you the ability to see where we are going and to enable you to provide comments. We think that this will help ensure that the MTBOK is truly developed by and for the Massage Therapy community.

The MTBOK itself will be in a form designed to help you provide specific comments to the Task Force. We are asking that to the extent possible, comments be focused on specific areas, and to that end we will include line numbers so that you can direct us to the exact spot of your concern. We are instituting an online form for submission of content, which will allow you to quickly and easily provide us with as many focused comments as needed rather than trying to assemble all of your thoughts into one document. This approach will also help us track how we respond to comments as well as make it easier for the 8 member task force to deal with the volume of incoming comments. Watch for the link when we release the document.

This won't be the only chance to comment on the MTBOK by a long shot. We will be hosting a face-to-face input session with the MTBOK Task force in September in Orlando Florida, and we will do a second call for comments after the next draft is released in a few months.

I hope you will be as excited as I am about the progress we have made so far. With your input and involvement the MTBOK will just keep getting better!

Opportunity to interact with the MTBOK Task Force and provide Input to the MTBOK

One of the foundations of the MTBOK is that it be built with as much input from the broad Massage Therapy community as possible. In the initial few months of the project there was little for stakeholders to focus on, but on September 15th of this year, the first draft of the MTBOK content will be released. This will allow for the community at large to see the direction that the Task Force is taking as well as much of the specifics that will be contained within the MTBOK itself.

An upcoming Stakeholder Input session to be held at the AMTA conference in Orlando from 4-5pm on September 24th, will be the first opportunity to interact with the full task force itself, and to directly provide feedback to the MTBOK Task Force members. It's also the best way to get a feel for the status and direction of the project through the eyes of the Task Force members.

The session will begin with a brief introduction and overview after which we will move into an interactive discussion format between attendees and a task force member at locations around the room.

There is a lot for anyone in the profession to gain from attending the session, since the goal of the MTBOK is to be a living, evolving, single repository for the domain of information related to Massage Therapy, and will thus be a resource for all. Participation in this session will provide the earliest opportunity to learn about the process and document and to be heard in person early in the development process.

I hope to see you there. If you can't attend this session, please note that when we release the first draft of the MTBOK, we will include instructions on how to submit comments on the document, and

we do hope you will participate in that. **MTBOK First Draft Released**
September 15, 2009

Download the [press release](#) and [actual content](#) here.

The period for commenting on the first draft is now closed while the 2nd draft is prepared for distribution on January 29, 2010. We will reopen the comment collection instrument at that time. Thank you..

[MTBOK Stewards Direction for the MTBOK Development Process added to MTBOK resources page.](#)

July 10, 2009

Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Task Force Announced

July 7, 2009

The Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Stewards are pleased to announce the volunteer MTBOK Task Force member selections have been made. Every attempt has been made to select a dynamic group of individuals who together represent what may be considered the broadly defined field of massage therapy.

Each of the MTBOK Task Force members were chosen for their experience, credentials and expertise as well as having a working understanding of at least one of the major areas impacting the current and future growth of the Massage Therapy profession. The members of the MTBOK Task Force are:

Megan Lavery

Kevin Pierce

Susan Salvo

Michael Shea

Steve Schenkman

Dawn Schmidt

Nancy Schmitt

JoEllen Sefton

The Task Force is responsible for initiating a profession-wide and unifying effort to articulate a common body of knowledge for the profession. Under the guidance of Chip Hines, a PMI certified Project Manager Professional, the Task Force members will begin work on the foundational elements of the MTBOK project in July, 2009. These foundational elements include:

- Definition of massage therapy

- Describing the Field (primarily to enhance understanding and appreciation of the profession by those outside the profession)
 - Scope of Practice
 - Terminology
- Competencies of an entry-level massage therapist (knowledge, skills, abilities)

The MTBOK project is expected to complete the foundational elements phase of the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge initiative in approximately one year.

Six organizations have agreed to jointly steward the MTBOK initiative. They are American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), AMTA Council of Schools, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP), Massage Therapy Foundation, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB) and National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB).

All stakeholders in Massage Therapy are encouraged to follow the progress of the project, and to provide comments, suggestions and make contributions. Specific instructions will be forthcoming as the project gets started this summer. Task Force bios and other MTBOK updates are available at www.mtbok.org.

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MTBOK Task Force Member Application Solicitation ended on May 1, 2009

The Task Force selection process is continuing and the Task Force is expected to be in place before July 1, 2009

Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Project Manager Announced

The Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Stewards are pleased to announce the appointment of **Chip Hines, MS, LMT** as the Project Manager for the definition phase of the project.

Chip is formerly both a senior federal government project manager and PMI-certified Project Management Professional. He brings with him a wealth of experience managing large scale projects requiring consensus-building within a diverse community. Chip is also a Licensed Massage Therapist (Maryland) who is NCBTMB certified and has taught advanced bodywork at the Baltimore School of Massage.

As project manager, Chip will direct and manage efforts of the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Task Force, to ensure its members successfully produce the desired outcomes within the time and resource constraints; serve as a public liaison for the Task Force; and act as a conduit to MTBOK Stewards. The task force, made up of subject matter experts in the field-practitioners, educators and researchers-, will be seated in July 2009 to define, develop and articulate the MTBOK. Foundational elements of the MTBOK project will consist of:

- Definition of massage therapy (scope of practice, terminology, describing the field);
- Definition of the competencies of an entry-level massage therapist, in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs).

Chip will serve a twelve-month contract and report directly to the MTBOK Stewards. The MTBOK Stewards consist of representatives from the American Massage Therapy Association, AMTA

Council of Schools, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards, Massage Therapy Foundation, and National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork.

For more information and ongoing updates on the Body of Knowledge Project, please visit www.mtbok.org.

Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Project announces Task Force Selection Process Opens March 17th

The Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Stewards will be accepting applications for the volunteer positions on the MTBOK Task Force beginning March 17th. There are eight positions available. Deadline for submissions is May 1st.

The MTBOK Stewards met in San Antonio, Texas in January to establish next steps in the MTBOK development process. Last month, the Stewards announced the establishment of a task force charged with defining a Body of Knowledge for the massage therapy profession, and posted a [job description for the Project Manager position](#) to guide the work of the Task Force. The [job description and application guidelines for Task Force volunteers](#) are available at www.mtbok.org. The task force will be seated in July, 2009. This volunteer position will require a nine-month commitment, with a projected completion date of April, 2010.

Interested Candidates should submit the following, contained in one electronic file (either Microsoft Word or PDF format):

- Resume/curriculum vitae
- Cover Letter
- List of professional references

Submit applications via email to mtboktf@gmail.com by May 1st.

Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Project Update

February 6, 2009

Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge Project Update February 6, 2009—The Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Project Stewards recently met in San Antonio, Texas to establish next steps in the MTBOK development process. The Stewards are pleased to announce the establishment of a structure to articulate the foundational elements common to a MTBOK shared by all stakeholders in the profession. The foundational elements of the MTBOK consist of: • Definition of massage therapy (scope of practice, terminology, describing the field) • Definition of the competencies of an entry-level massage therapist, in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). This profession-wide initiative will be managed and supported by a project manager. The position will serve a twelve-month contract and will report directly to the MTBOK Stewards. A job description for the Project Manager position and application procedure has been posted on www.mtbok.org. A task force, made up of subject matter experts in the field—practitioners, educators and researchers—will be established to define, develop

and articulate the MTBOK. The task force will be seated in July, 2009. The task force will be managed and supported by the Project Manager. Individuals interested in serving on the task force are encouraged to visit www.mtbok.org in March to review the task force criteria as well as steps required for submission of interest. The MTBOK Stewards consist of representatives from the American Massage Therapy Association, AMTA Council of Schools, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards, Massage Therapy Foundation, and National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork.

MT BOK ---Who we are.

Who We Are

Task Force Member Biographies

[Bryan Fong, LMT, MBA, NCTMB](#)

[Megan E. Lavery, LMT, CZB, NCTMB](#)

[Kevin Pierce, LMT, MBA](#)

[Susan G. Salvo, BEd, LMT, NTS, CI, NCTMB](#)

[Steven Schenkman, BS, LMT](#)

[Dawn M. Schmidt, BS, LMT](#)

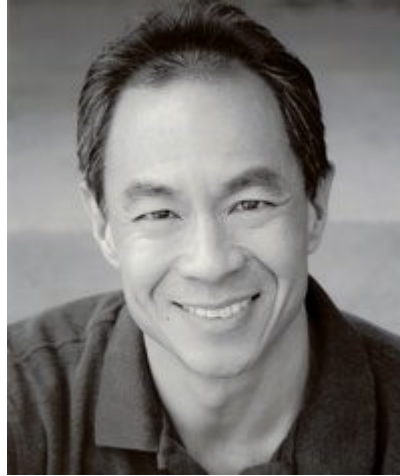
[JoEllen Sefton](#)

[Michael Shea, PhD, LMT](#)

[Chip Hines, MS, PMP, LMT, NCTMB](#)

Bryan Fong, LMT, MBA, NCTMB

Bryan Fong has been a Massage Therapist for over 12 years and is Licensed in Utah, Arizona, Nevada and Hawaii. He specializes in chronic pain and injury related rehabilitation and has also worked as a Massage Therapist in the spa industry. Bryan has a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) as well as Bachelor of Science degrees in both Finance and Accounting. He brings a wealth of business related experience to the MTBOK project, including time as a business franchise owner and as an Administrator in a large Rehabilitation Center managing 7 departments and over 120 full time staff members. His mix of knowledge and skills in the Massage Therapy profession and in business management and operation will be a great asset to the MTBOK project. ♦

**Megan E. Lavery, LMT, CZB, NCTMB**

Megan Lavery is a Certified Zero Balancer and Massage Therapist with 16 years experience. She has worked extensively with the Kentucky legislative process in areas relating to massage therapy laws and relationships with other healthcare fields, as well as being an advocate for LMTs in the state. Ms. Lavery teaches in both an entry-level massage school, and as a CEU provider. She is on the faculty, and the National Board of Directors, of the Zero Balancing Health Association. She has a private practice in Bowling Green, Kentucky specializing in Deep Tissue, Sports Massage, and Zero Balancing.



Kevin Pierce, LMT, MBA

Kevin Pierce has over 15 years experience as a nationally certified Massage Therapy practitioner, educator and administrator. As a therapist, Kevin's career focuses primarily on rehabilitative work with post accident clients and semi-pro & professional athletes. His education and administrative experience includes classroom & lab instruction, program management, faculty training and setting standards of practice and professionalism on a national level in both the hands-on and education fields of Massage Therapy. He holds a Bachelors degree in Communications and a Masters in Business Administration. He is currently the National Program Director of Massage Therapy for Anthem Education Group. He serves as a member of the Community Service Grant Committee with the Massage Therapy Foundation and brings expertise to the MTBOK in the areas of curriculum development, content analysis and education program development.

**Susan G. Salvo, BEd, LMT, NTS, CI, NCTMB**

Susan G. Salvo is a massage therapist with over 25 years of experience. She is an instructor at the Louisiana Institute of *Massage Therapy* and author of *Massage Therapy: Principles and Practice* and *Mosby's Pathology for Massage Therapists* as well as contributing author to several other massage therapy textbooks. Ms Salvo holds an associate degree in History and a baccalaureate degree in Education from McNeese State University, where she is currently working on her Masters of Science in Educational Leadership and Instructional Technology. Ms. Salvo has been married to her childhood friend, Michael Breaux, since 1990 and has 5 children and 5 stepchildren. In her free time, she likes to cook, travel, read aloud to children, and watch old



movies.

Steven Schenkman, BS, LMT

Steven Schenkman, education consultant to career colleges, allied health, business & massage therapy schools, served as President of The New York College for Wholistic Health, Education, & Research (now known as the NY College of Health Professions) from 1989 through 2001. A NYS licensed Massage Therapist since 1984 Steven was a founding Board member of the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB), Chairman of the NY State Massage Therapy Board and President of the American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia (AOBTA). Steven is the author of a new book "*Massage Therapy: What It Is and How It Works*" for Cengage Learning scheduled for publication 7/09.



To learn more about Steven

Schenkman: <http://massagemag.com/massage-blog/everything-education/about/>

Dawn M. Schmidt, BS, LMT

Dawn Schmidt has an eclectic massage practice in Washington. She's experienced in education, currently adjunct faculty at Bastyr University, formerly Director of Education and Instructor at Brenneke School of Massage. She holds a Teaching Credential in Physical Education/Kinesiology. She served as commissioner on the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA), founding member of Academic Consortium on Complimentary and Alternative Health Care (ACCAHC) and contributing member of Massage Therapy Research Consortium (MTRC). She consults on research as well as ethical and legal issues for the massage profession.



JoEllen Sefton

Dr. Sefton, ATC, CMT has been a State and Nationally Certified Massage Therapist for almost 15 years, and a Certified Athletic Trainer for 8 years. She is currently an Assistant Professor at Auburn University where she develops and teaches courses related to neuromechanics, massage and sports medicine. She is the Director of the Auburn Neuromechanics Research Laboratory, where she studies how massage therapy influences the neuromuscular and physiological systems; and how to utilize this knowledge to improve clinical outcomes. She brings experience as a massage practitioner, massage business owner, researcher/author, grant writer, developer/instructor in higher education, and a credentialed allied health care practitioner.

**Michael Shea, PhD, LMT**

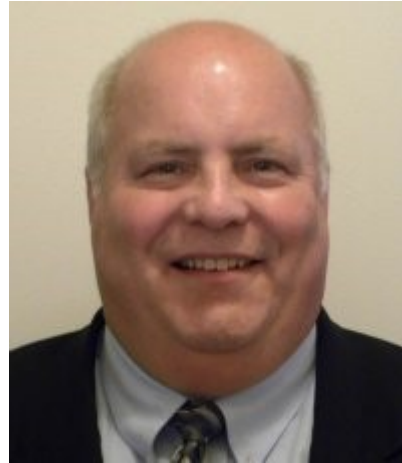
Michael J. Shea, Ph.D. has been a licensed massage therapist in Florida since 1976. He has been an advanced Rolfer, was one of the first certified Full Instructors of CranioSacral Therapy in 1986. Michael has a doctorate in Somatic Psychology from the Union Institute and a Masters degree in Buddhist Psychology from Naropa University. He is adjunct faculty, doctoral committee member and teaches human embryology in the pre & perinatal psychology doctoral programs at the Santa Barbara Graduate Institute. He mentors doctoral dissertations in manual therapy at the International University of Professional Studies. His clinical focus is on treating infants and children with neurological problems and trauma for the past 25 years. He is the author of Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy Volumes One and Two.



MTBOK Project Manager

Chip Hines, MS, PMP, LMT, NCTMB

Chip Hines is a former senior federal government project manager and is a PMI-certified project management professional (PMP). He brings with him a wealth of experience in managing large-scale projects that require consensus building within a diverse community. Chip is also a Licensed Massage Therapist (Maryland) who is NCBTMB certified and has taught advanced bodywork at the Baltimore School of Massage.



MT BOK Resources

Resources

[ABMP State Regulation Guide](#)
[Business Case Summary](#)
[Checklist of MTBOK Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Coverage](#)
[DOL Occupational Outlook 2008-2009](#)
[Iowa Reflexology Study 2004](#)
[MBLEx Content Outline](#)
[NCBTMB Candidate Handbook](#)
[NCBTMB Needs Assessment Survey Report](#)

Developmental Versions of the MTBOK

- [Second Draft \(most recent\)](#)
- [Second Draft Press Release](#)
- [First Draft](#)
- [First Draft Press Release](#)

[Download Event Flyer for the MTBOK Stakeholder Input Session which was held September 24, 2009 in Orlando, FL](#)

MTBOK Stewards Direction for the MTBOK Development Process

Develop a Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge with integrity and transparency in accordance with the values presented in the business case and that the profession can adopt confidently.

Shared Values of Stewardship

Inclusion - The MTBOK must be established for the profession by the profession. All major stakeholders in the profession should participate in some way.

Transparency - Continuous two-way communication should be maintained in some form with all major stakeholders in the profession, including access to the work in progress and the results of the work.

Validity - The MTBOK must be well vetted through a community of subject matter experts as well as through the larger community of stakeholders in the profession - practitioners, educators, researchers, organizations that support these professionals, consumers, allied professions, healthcare and spa employers/providers, etc. The MTBOK needs to continue to remain valid even as the profession and its environment evolve. It needs to have a commitment to an ongoing review through its evolution.

Breadth ♦ The MTBOK should be universally applicable across the full breadth of the massage therapy profession. The breadth of a BOK is typically expressed as the ♦scope of practice♦ of the profession ♦ in this case, the boundaries within which massage therapists practice.

Independence - The initiative should be conducted by a taskforce independent from the control or undue influence of any stakeholder group or other professional entity. As part of its independence, the taskforce should share its results with the profession broadly, and should not seek ♦approval♦ or ♦ratification♦ from any stakeholder group.

Adaptability/Flexibility - Things are constantly changing during a complex initiative involving multiple stakeholders like this. So the people involved need to be able to quickly adapt to changes in their environment.

Collective Agreement - The working relationship of the stewards will involve a collective agreement; each of the organizations and its principals agrees on a framework and ♦ground rules♦ for proceeding with this initiative.



Federation of State
Massage Therapy Boards



Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) Steward Organizations

MT BOK Project Blog

Saturday, April 2, 2016

Past time to update.

So here it is, almost 5 years since the inaugural MTBOK was published, and what has happened? I'm sorry to say that ultimately what began as a brief pause to give the profession time to absorb and adopt as well as make suggested changes ended up as an extended 5 year delay in adoption. I think this has been a well intentioned, but ultimately ill advised approach that has prevented acceptance and incorporation throughout the community, and has resulted in a static rather than "living" MTBOK as was promised to the profession.

I was the original Project Manager for the MTBOK, which I continue to believe is one of the best things the various professional organizations who constitute the MTBOK Stewards have done for the profession. The concept was important, and was developed with an almost unheard of spirit of cooperation by these organizations. It also laid out a process that was well thought out, and helped forestall the likely objections that could derail this project. We have a lively, open, and passionate professional membership, and trying to define the body of knowledge that guides and grows the profession was likely to create issues.

Like this country itself, we have liberal and conservative views of the profession, libertarian, narrow focused sub professions, progressives and even deniers. Of course this diversity is both a strength and a challenge.

The original project environment was designed to get a good, solid start to defining "what an entry level massage therapist should know and be able to do" in order to be considered professional. This defined the scope of the project to make it manageable and to not require expertise in all the advanced approaches professionals use in the broad massage therapy profession. Some other characteristics of the study:

Independence: the task force would work independently of the sponsoring organizations in order to ensure the steward organizations did not direct the outcome.

Formal Guidelines: were given to the task force that mandated an approach that was as inclusive as possible and that as much as possible input from the profession was to be solicited, encouraged and reviewed by the task force with a record of consensus determination.

No New Bureaucracies: the task force was composed of widely open solicitation, rigorously evaluated by a group from the steward organizations and representative of the wide range of talent

we have in the profession as a whole. But the project was of fixed length, and the task force would be dissolved as soon as the formal product was developed and presented/published for the profession. This would ensure that following work would not become the pet project of the few already vested in the product. This was an important aspect of the project, but also left the MTBOK without vested champions to ensure its integration with and adoption throughout the profession.

There was some controversy surrounding the final product (in my opinion virtually all of this could have been resolved with more discussion and publicity) and ultimately the steward organizations decided to stand back leave open a place for comments to be addressed when the next update took place. What first sounded like a few months of delay while the stewards continued to get the word out and solicit next steps ended up being a 5 year period in which the MTBOK was left to get dusty.

So, the bad news is that the MTBOK hasn't reached its potential, isn't "living", hasn't been updated, hasn't been changed, hasn't been integrated and adopted by the community, and hasn't addressed the more advanced knowledge, skills and abilities in a full Body of Knowledge of our profession. The good news is that the existing MTBOK fulfills its mission of describing what an entry level massage therapist needs to know and be able to do.

Before anybody starts shouting, it's not perfect, and there may be some things that need significant change. But the problem is that if there had been addressed years ago we could have achieved an integrated, adopted and secure foundational document for the profession

.

So what's different today? I've finally heard rumblings within the stewards that at least some of them want to complete the job, or at least get the process started again.

I urge all of you, whether you love or hate the MTBOK, that you notify the steward organizations (see the organizations listed at the MTBOK.org site) what your thoughts are - and it doesn't need to be long like this blog - just tell them to get it moving again. I would caution that a Body Of Knowledge document is a foundation of a profession, and I really think it is not feasible to ask that the MTBOK be abandoned.

It's as easy as sending an email to mtbok_comments@mtbok.org.

Let's get this party started... And thanks for all you do to make our profession better!

– Chip

Posted by [Chip Hines](#) at 10:43 AM 7 comments: 

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Thursday, May 13, 2010

A beginning, not an end

It's a tremendously exciting time! This Saturday (May 15, 2010) we will be announcing the release of the inaugural Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge (MTBOK) at the "Highlighting Massage Therapy in CIM" conference in Seattle, WA. It's been over a year since I started on the project, and the MTBOK itself took almost 11 months to build after the MTBOK task force began their work.

The task force has done an extraordinary job on this effort, and has spent many, many hours researching, writing, evaluating your comments and achieving consensus on the inaugural MTBOK content.

While there is such a tendency to focus on the end of a project, this whole effort is about beginning a future for massage therapy. That's why I like to call the upcoming release the **inaugural** MTBOK.

So with the release this Saturday we will be celebrating a **beginning** far more than the successful project conclusion. Our mission was to put together an MTBOK built by and for the profession. Since eight people can only do so much, we went to lengths to get as much input from all of the stakeholders. We did a quick draft, then opened it up for public comment. We held an open Stakeholder Input Session at the AMTA national convention in Orlando last September which was mostly an interactive dialog in groups. We then did another round of public comments, and we met with several groups including the major schools organizations (we met with the third one in June) and the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards.

We received over 1,400 formal comments from our stakeholders, and all but about 30 of those were read, reviewed, discussed and in some way became part of the new MTBOK.

All this was to say that I think we did a great job of representing the profession and listening and reacting appropriately to comments and suggestions.

But here is where the important part comes. What happens next is up to you. The MTBOK is a living document, and you should think of it that way. If things need to be tweaked or changed, let people know about it. (The new approach to receiving comments is to ask that you submit them via email to mtbok_comments@mtbok.org) The MTBOK Steward organizations plan to periodically review and update the MTBOK in response to your needs and comments. It's really a mistake to think of the MTBOK as a finished, static

product... it really needs to grow with the knowledge of the profession, and to help the whole profession move in a similar direction.

It seems to me that there are two things that need to happen with the MTBOK now in addition to its growth as a living document. First, it needs to stay in the minds of our stakeholders so that any adjustments in its current form can be made. Second, it needs to be adopted and ingrained into the work of each of the massage therapy domains (Practice, Accreditation, Research, Certification, Education and Licensure) so that the profession as a whole is moving in pretty much the same direction.

For those of you who think it needs work... great! That's the nature of a living document, and while you may not get all the changes you want, that's part of building consensus in such a big, wonderful, complex profession.

Thanks to all of you who have participated in this effort. I really think it's a great step forward for massage therapy.

Posted by **Chip Hines** at **12:13 PM** **18 comments:** 

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Friday, January 29, 2010

Just released - the MTBOK 2nd Draft for review and comment

We have just released the 2nd draft of the MTBOK as scheduled, and it's available to download at <http://www.mtbok.org> along with a brief press release.

I hope you will go to the site, download the document, read it and provide us with your comments (a link to our online comment form is on the site and on the first page of the MTBOK document).

We will hold a formal comment period open until March 8, 2010. In my opinion this is the most important part of the project because the profession has a chance to give us your guidance on where you think we need correction, and I hope to let us know where we have got it right.

We do listen - every one of the 600 or so comments we received on the first draft was read and taken into account as the 2nd draft was produced. I think the MTBOK has gotten much better as a result of your participation, and I

hope we can continue to receive your suggestions.

We will be producing a final MTBOK for delivery in early May, and with your help it can become rooted in our profession and a living document that changes with the growth of our profession.

Its an exciting time!

Posted by **Chip Hines** at 8:54 AM 12 comments: 

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Labels: **MTBOK**

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

MTBOK 2nd Draft to be published Friday, January 29, 2010

We are just around the corner from starting the e-presses and pushing out the 2nd draft of the MTBOK, and its a busy week! On friday the new draft will go up on the MTBOK website (<http://www.mtbok.org>) as an Adobe Acrobat file available for download. We are putting up a new link to a comment form so that we can get your suggestions, updates and recommendations.

As before, the comment form has a couple of questions about who your are or represent then asks for the Section number and line number that your comment is about. Provide as many separate comments as you need - we have tried to make the form fairly short and sweet so that you can enter something quickly and easily and we can better manage our review and change process.

The formal comment period is only going to be open for a month, so we do ask you to get any comments in quickly. We wont shut off the comment process (both because if we have time we will continue to process new comments and because even after the time period ends we want to be able to pass comments on to those who will continue to monitor and update the MTBOK).

The MTBOK is more streamlined, and is I think substantially better as a result of the approximately 600 comments we received on the 1st draft. Although we cant individually respond to the comments we receive, everyone was read by the task force, and in some way impacted the document and our discussions.

I hope you like the work that has been done so far, and I look forward to your comments on the document. The final version will be presented in early May, so we won't have much of a break over the next few months.

Thanks for your participation and support.

chip

Posted by **Chip Hines** at 1:56 PM 7 comments: 

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Thursday, October 22, 2009

Energy Terminology Cleanup

After reviewing a lot of comments regarding Polarity Therapy and the MTBOK, I believe most of the issues relate to a mis-interpretation of the MTBOK itself, its impact, and the intent. We have made some changes which we hope will resolve the concerns, and offer the following additional information:

Impact and Intent: The MTBOK is “just” a body of knowledge for the Massage Therapy profession – it does not now, nor will it, have any legal force of law or regulation. As it stands now, the MTBOK does not in any way suggest that other professions such as Polarity Therapy belong under Massage Therapy, nor does it say or imply that Polarity Therapists must or even should be Massage Therapists. Of course, even if that was in the document (it is not) it wouldn't matter since the MTBOK does not change law or regulation.

Although the MTBOK does include work including energy in the scope of practice, it clearly states in the section description (Section 130) that the therapist must have specific post graduate training where necessary or required. The MTBOK recognizes that although there may be some overlap between distinct professions this does not imply that a trained professional in one must be in the other.

Although the Scope and Description sections of the MTBOK are intended to cover the full breadth of the Massage Therapy profession (and does not include other professions such as Polarity Therapists), the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA) section is even more narrowly focused – it is specific to entry level Massage Therapists (and not other professions such as Polarity Therapists).

In the MTBOK, the section relating to energy actually only requires that an (entry level) massage therapist should know broad theoretical frameworks of several different energy approaches, and although it did mention Poles, and included the word 'polarity,' Polarity Therapy itself was not mentioned, nor is there a skill or ability required for it. Nevertheless, since this area has apparently caused some concern, particularly for people in Polarity Therapy and other energy focused professions, we have made some specific changes which will appear in the 2nd draft:

- **The term “Polarity” has been removed from the document**
- **The KSA section originally titled “Energetic Approaches” has been changed to “Energetic Theory”**
- **The bulleted item under Skills and Abilities has been changed to read “Identify personal perception of energy and one common theory of energetics.”**

Let me reiterate one key point – the MTBOK does not now, nor will it suggest or recommend (much less mandate) that polarity therapists be massage therapists. I’m not sure why this concern even got started. Regardless, I hope that this explanation as well as the document changes noted above will help to clear up any misunderstanding.

Posted by **Chip Hines** at **9:44 AM** **6 comments:** 

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Saturday, September 26, 2009

MTBOK Stakeholder Input Session was a huge success!

You may know that on Thursday, September 24th we held an MTBOK Stakeholder Input Session open to the public in Orlando, FL. We filled a double room, and senior representatives from all of the MTBOK Steward organizations (AMTA, ABMP, AMTA COS, FSMTB, MTF, and NCBTMB) were present.

The idea of holding ad open to the public meeting at the AMTA convention site gave a lot of massage therapists the opportunity to participate just as we had hoped. I did see a number of name tags with the "Public" identifier on them and I talked to one attendee who had come a long way to attend - so I'm happy that we got outside attendance.. We also were told that more than 40 attendees had returned their registrations for CE classes to attend, so we

know we had interest!

I wish I had exact attendance, but I don't. ... I do know we had more than 100 since all the chairs were occupied, and we had some standing, but I don't have an exact count. Its not bad that we could get a number nearly 10% of the total convention attendees! I think the work is very important, and I'm glad that we have so many people willing to tell us what they think.

All of our Task Force members (see "Who we are" at www.mtbok.org) were present, and after a brief introduction, we broke into 4 large groups with 2 Task Force members recording and facilitating the stakeholder input at each group.

We came away from the session enthused and energized, and from my perspective moving around the room, I suspect that a lot of the attendees felt the same. The positive energy and interest was palpable, and the interaction was great.

What we got out of the session far exceeded our expectations, and we couldn't be more delighted. We spent the next morning (and some of that night) organizing and going over the notes from the sessions. The Task Force facilitators presented each of the notes they took, we discussed each, and talked about how of the comments would impact the MTBOK itself.

In the end, we have a list of updates we are making, and several items that need to be further researched and/or discussed before we take final action.

We also shared a number of less specific thoughts from the meeting - how the participants seemed to feel about the job thus far, and what "themes" we saw as a result of the discussion.

If any of you reading this were in attendance, Id love to hear what you thought. Everybody keep in mind that although this was our only scheduled in-person input session, we have a simple and easy way to comment on the MTBOK itself via an online form. Both the MTBOK itself, and access to the comment form are available at our website: <http://www.mtbok.org>.

Im working now on organizing and tracking the comments and changes we receive. Over the next week or so Im hoping to catch up on responding to comments we have already received. Our intention is to respond to all comments... at least as long as the volume of input can be managed. So if

you have provided input and haven't heard back in the next couple of weeks - let me know.

Posted by **Chip Hines** at **10:10 AM** 3 comments: 

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Labels: **MTBOK**; **Massage Therapy**

Saturday, September 19, 2009

Some MTBOK Clarifications

Im pleased that we've begun to get responses already on the draft MTBOK, and its just what we are hoping for. Its also clear that the respondents are passionate about the profession, and have given thought to their responses.

As a task force of 8 trying to represent such a broad complex profession, we think its vital that we get feedback from the community. Thats why we have tried to make it easy to do so, why we have scheduled two drafts for review (the next update will be just after the first of the year) and why we are holding a public input session in Orlando, FL next week.

In reading over your comments though I can tell there is some misunderstanding about the approach we have taken and the impact of the MTBOK (at least in the near term). So I thought I would clear some of that up. Please keep in mind that Im going a little out on a limb here because Im not actually a member of the Task Force... but if they take issue with what I say here, I will relay that back to you as well.

- First, the MTBOK does not, and will not have force of law or regulation. Which means that whatever the final product includes will not change any State or local laws or regulations, at least in the near term. Over time we believe that the educators and regulators, etc will come to value a single, profession wide body of knowledge built by and for the profession as a valuable single source of authoritative information. We also believe that the reason for the wide range of requirements for certification/licensure across the country is a direct result of organizations individually trying to cope without a comprehensive, profession-wide adopted standard. We think the establishment of the MTBOK will help over time resolve a lot of the inconsistencies that you experience from jurisdiction to jurisdiction across the country.

- Some people have expressed concern that the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) are too much for an entry level massage therapist. The Task Force believes that the MTBOK needs to grow with the knowledge and science that supports the profession, and has included some new areas that we believe therapists, even at the entry level, need to be exposed to. As in most of the knowledge areas, entry level therapists would not be expected to have in depth knowledge but would be expected to know what it is and what the general impact is on their work. This helps position a Massage Therapist to better guide their career and continuing education over time.
- The MTBOK is to be created by and for the profession. Which means that it is supposed to represent what our profession believes is the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform their work. We want and need your input. I suggest that as you look through the document, your approach should be to consider whether or not individual KSAs should be something that all therapists need to know and or do, not the details of implementation. If you disagree on something, tell us about it and why using the comment form.
- The task force is trying to be sure that the variety of work that is being performed by massage therapists is included in the scope and KSA requirements. Our field is broad, and the MTBOK hopefully represents that well. We are focused on Massage Therapy, and there is no attempt to try to bring other allied professions under the MTBOK. In fact, we have tried to invite non Massage Therapy organizations to comment so that any issues may be resolved before it is finalized. Since one of the ways a profession gets widely recognized is through the development and existence of a Body of Knowledge, we would encourage other allied professions to develop their own.
- Finally, the specific competencies (in terms of Knowledge Skills and Abilities) in the draft version of the MTBOK are for entry level therapists, and do not include the additional KSAs that are required as a massage therapist advances or specializes. The method of documenting these are not addressed in phase 1 of the MTBOK at all, and this work will be done later as appropriate. Phase 1 specifically notes that some of the work performed by massage therapists requires additional knowledge, certification and/or licensure. So, for example, although we believe all massage therapists should be exposed to non-western energy theory and the existence of meridians and points associated with these, it does not mean that this is adequate for a massage therapist to practice reflexology or acupressure without the appropriate additional study, certification and/or licensure.

I hope you will keep these points in mind as you read the draft MTBOK and that you do let us know what you agree or don't agree with. The effects of this won't be immediate, but I hope you will agree that the end result will significantly strengthen the foundation on which our amazing profession is built.

-

Posted by **Chip Hines** at **10:07 AM** 3 comments: 

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Chip Hines

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