

AARON D. FORD
Attorney General

CRAIG A. NEWBY
First Assistant Attorney General

CHRISTINE JONES BRADY
Second Assistant Attorney General



STATE OF NEVADA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

100 North Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701

TERESA BENITEZ-
THOMPSON
Chief of Staff

LESLIE NINO PIRO
General Counsel

HEIDI PARRY STERN
Solicitor General

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OPINION NO. 2025-03

ANATOMY; BOARDS AND
COMMISSIONS; CHIROPRACTIC;
HEALTH; HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE;
LICENSES; MASSAGE THERAPY,
BOARD OF; NAPRAPATHY; PHYSICAL
THERAPY: Stretching services offered by individuals not licensed as massage therapists may fall within the definition of “massage therapy” under NRS 640C.060 and “structural integration” under NRS 640C.085 if they involve manual application to the muscular structure and soft tissues, or are intended to improve the functional relationship of the parts of the human body to each other within the influences of gravity. Such services require a massage therapy license under Nevada law.

Elisabeth Barnard
Executive Director
Nevada State Board of Massage Therapy
1755 E. Plumb Lane
Suite 252
Reno, Nevada 89502

Dear Director Barnard,

Pursuant to NRS 228.150, you have requested an opinion from this office as to whether businesses offering “stretching” or “assisted stretching” (collectively, “stretching services”) to clients in a studio environment—by employees who are not otherwise licensed as massage therapists but who touch clients as they are engaging in the stretching by applying an external force to help elongate and stretch a client’s muscles as the client engages in the stretch—require a massage license. This letter addresses that question.

QUESTION

Whether engaging in “stretching services” with clients in a studio environment—by unlicensed employees who touch clients as they are engaging in the stretching by applying an external force to help elongate and stretch a client’s muscles as the client engages in the stretch—fits within the definition of “massage therapy” in NRS 640C.060 or “structural integration” in NRS 640C.085, therefore requiring a massage license.

SHORT ANSWER

It depends upon the specific circumstances. In Nevada, stretching services offered by individuals who are not licensed as massage therapists may fall within the definition of “massage therapy” under NRS 640C.060 and “structural integration” under NRS 640C.085, depending on how the services are provided.

ANALYSIS

I. Massage Therapy in NRS 640C.060

NRS 640C.060 defines “massage therapy” as: “The application of a system of pressure to the muscular structure and soft tissues of the human body for therapeutic purpose” This includes, but is not limited to, techniques such as effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, compression, vibration, friction, and movements applied manually, with or without superficial heat, cold, water, or lubricants, for the purposes of maintaining good health and establishing and maintaining good physical condition. NRS 640C.060(1)(a)-(g).

Stretching, when performed manually and applied to the muscular structure and soft tissues, can be considered a form of “movement applied manually” as described in the statute. NRS 640C.(1)(g). Therefore, if an individual provides assisted stretching services that involve manual application to the muscles and soft tissues, these services may be classified as “massage therapy” under Nevada law. NRS 640C.060(2)(b).

II. Structural Integration in NRS 640C.085

NRS 640C.085 defines “structural integration” as: “The application of a system of manual therapy, movement education and embodiment education

that is intended to improve the functional relationship of the parts of the human body to each other within the influences of gravity.”

The statute specifically excludes practices such as physical therapy, chiropractic and naprapathy from this definition. NRS 640C.085(2)(a)-(c).

Stretching, when performed manually and applied to the muscular structure and soft tissues, can be considered a form of manual therapy. If the stretching services are intended to improve the “functional relationship of the parts of the human body to each other within the influences of gravity,” they may be classified as “structural integration” under Nevada law.

III. Stretching Without Application of Pressure to Muscles or Soft Tissue

If stretching services are offered outside the context of massage therapy, *i.e.* in a fitness or wellness setting without the application of pressure to the muscular structure and soft tissues, then a massage therapy license is not necessary. For instance, some establishments offering assisted stretching services provided by individuals who are not licensed massage therapists offer guided stretching sessions without application of pressure to the muscular structure and soft tissues. This type of service would not fall within the definition of “massage therapy” or “structural integration.”

IV. Other Legal Considerations

The legislative history of both AB 250 in 2005, and AB 179 in 2017, reveals that the Legislature’s primary focus in enacting the statutes was enforcement against prostitution and sex trafficking problems. The Legislature also made several changes to the statutes governing the Massage Board itself, including definitions (with no mention of stretching).

Some other states have addressed this issue by specifically listing “stretching” as a massage technique. Ohio (Ohio Administrative Code 4731-1-05) and Indiana (Indiana Code 25-21.8-1-4). This approach seems to indicate that, at least in some circumstances, “stretching” can be considered a form of “massage therapy”.

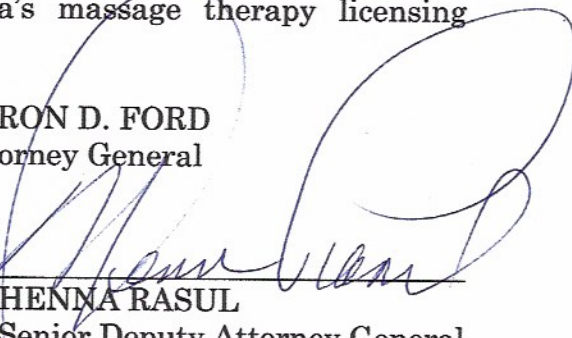
CONCLUSION

As discussed above, stretching services offered by individuals not licensed as massage therapists may fall within the definition of “massage therapy” under NRS 640C.060 and “structural integration” under NRS

640C.085 if they involve manual application to the muscular structure and soft tissues, or are intended to improve the functional relationship of the parts of the human body to each other within the influences of gravity. Such services require a massage therapy license under Nevada law. NRS 640C.060(1)(g) and NRS 640C.085(1).

Stretching services provided by individuals who are not licensed massage therapists, however, that involve guided stretching sessions without application of pressure to the muscular structure and soft tissues would not fall within the definition of "massage therapy" or "structural integration". These services are not subject to Nevada's massage therapy licensing requirement.

AARON D. FORD
Attorney General

By: 

HENNA RASUL
Senior Deputy Attorney General