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Nevada State Board of Massage Therapy

Advisory Opinion 2026-01

Pamela Henderson
885 Dunkirk River Court
Henderson, NV 89011

Dear Ms. Henderson,

Pursuant to Nevada Administrative Code (“NAC”) 640C.530 to 640C.560, inclusive, you requested an advisory opinion from the Nevada State Board of Massage Therapy (“Board”) regarding whether the modality you practice, spinal flow, falls within the definition of “massage therapy” set forth in Nevada Revised Statute (“NRS”) 640C.060. This letter sets forth the Board’s decision regarding your question below.

You have specifically asked whether “spinal flow” which you have described as a technique that is done to a client who is fully clothed and uses “gentle, non-force modality that utilizes light touch at specific points along the spine and nervous system with the intention of supporting relaxation, stress reduction, and overall wellness.” In your request, you further state that the spinal flow technique is “based on facilitating nervous system awareness and energetic connection through gentle contact and observation of the body’s responses.” Lastly, you state that spinal flow is not “tissue manipulation for muscular treatment; massage or kneading muscles; physical therapy; diagnosis, treatment, or cure of medical conditions; nor deep tissue work.” As set forth in more detail below, the Board’s decision is that, as presented, spinal flow does not fall within the definition of “massage therapy” set forth in NRS 640C.060.

ANALYSIS

NRS 640C.060 defines “massage therapy” as:

1. “Massage therapy” means the application of a system of pressure to the muscular structure and soft tissues of the human body for therapeutic purposes, including, without limitation:

- (a) Effleurage;
- (b) Petrissage;
- (c) Tapotement;
- (d) Compressions;
- (e) Vibration;
- (f) Friction; and
- (g) Movements applied manually with or without superficial heat, cold, water or lubricants for the purpose of maintaining good health and establishing and maintaining good physical condition.

2. The term does not include:

1755 E. Plumb Lane, Suite 252 Reno, NV 89502
Phone: 775.687.9955 Fax: 775.786.4264 www.massagetherapy.nv.gov

- (a) Diagnosis, adjustment, mobilization or manipulation of any articulations of the body or spine; or
- (b) The demonstration of a product on a person that applies a system of pressure to the muscular structure and soft tissues of the human body, provided that the demonstration is not longer than 2 minutes.

Under the rules of statutory construction, when a statute is clear and unambiguous a court will give the language its plain, everyday meaning. *California Commercial v. Amedeo Vegas I, Inc.*, 119 Nev. 143, 145 (2003). In this case, the Board has not further defined the terms “effleurage,” “petrissage,” “tapotement,” “compressions,” “vibrations,” nor “friction,” as such, we give each term its every day meaning.

The term “effleurage” is defined as “horizontal strokes applied with fingers, hand, or forearm that usually follow the fiber direction of the underlying muscle, fascial planes, or dermatome pattern.” (Mosby’s Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, Third Edition, 2004) The term “petrissage” is defined as “kneading; rhythmic rolling, lifting, squeezing, and wringing of soft tissue.” (Mosby’s Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, Third Edition, 2004) The term “tapotement” is defined as “springy blows to the body at a fast rate to create rhythmic compression of the tissue.” (Mosby’s Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, Third Edition, 2004) The term “compression” is defined as “pressure into the body to spread tissue against underlying structures.” (Mosby’s Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, Third Edition, 2004) The term “vibration” is defined as “specific circular or transverse movements that do not glide on the skin and that are focused on the underlying tissue.” (Mosby’s Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, Third Edition, 2004) The term “friction” is defined as “fine or coarse tremulous movement that creates reflexive responses.” (Mosby’s Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, Third Edition, 2004)

The Board considered these definitions and determined that “spinal flow” as presented as a modality as “gentle, non-force modality that utilizes light touch at specific points along the spine and nervous system with the intention of supporting relaxation, stress reduction, and overall wellness” does not meet the definition of “massage therapy” set forth in NRS 640C.060 because “spinal flow” is not effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, compression, vibration, nor friction. The Board also considered whether “spinal flow” is “movements applied manually with or without superficial heat, cold, water or lubricants for the purpose of maintaining good health and establishing and maintaining good physical condition.” In its discussion, the Board determined that the modality was more of a wellness service as defined in NRS 629.580 because it involved mind-body healing practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion at the June 8, 2026, Board meeting, the Board issues this Advisory Opinion 2026-01, determining that “spinal flow” as presented does not meet the definition of “massage therapy” as set forth in NRS 640C.060.



Rebecca Dorangricchia, Chair