



ADVOCATE FOR MASSAGE THERAPY AS A RECOGNIZED AND RESPECTED HEALTHCARE PROFESSION

September 16, 2019

To: WSMTA Board of Directors and Members

From: WSMTA President, Marybeth Berney, LMT (<mailto:mberney@mywsmta.org>, www.mywsmta.org)

Re: Highlights from the WA Dept. of Health - Health Systems Quality Assurance Division (HSQA) - Associations Update meeting September 10, 2019

What is the Department of Health's HSQA?

According to the Department of Health's (DOH) website, *"Health System Quality Assurance's top priority is to protect and improve the health of people in Washington State. We do this by helping to prevent injuries, develop health systems and improve patient safety. We work closely with communities and local health partners to build strong health systems and prevention programs. This helps ensure that everyone has access to good healthcare and emergency medical services."*

Health Systems Quality Assurance (HSQA) regulates and supports more than 463,000 health professionals in 83 health professions, and 11,000 health groups and programs. Each year we review more than 14,000 complaints and inspect thousands of facilities. Each month we respond to an average of 24,000 phone calls and thousands of emails."

Today's meeting, hosted by HSQA, was an annual gathering of representatives from the various Washington health profession associations. For example, in attendance were representatives from associations for massage therapists, chiropractors, PTs, OTs, nurses, NDs, MDs, EAMPs, midwives, podiatrists, etc. At this meeting HSQA division leaders update the associations on various projects, budget matters and legislative priorities for the coming session.

In my opinion, HSQA has done a good job in working collaboratively with the health profession associations. In regular meetings, they take input from the various professions to inform their decision making. Now, that does not mean that we--LMTs always get what we want. The balancing act is complex given that HSQA oversees almost 500,000 healthcare professionals practicing in 83 professions across 359 credential types, 12,000 facilities across 21 facility types and 2,500 educational and training programs across 4 educational and training types (massage education programs being 1 of these types). In each of the remaining sections of this report, are the various topics discussed in today's HSQA Association meeting.

HELMS (Healthcare Enforcement and Licensing Modernization Solution)

This is the project that is working to replace the old outdated IT system that HSQA has been utilizing. The new system will be much more robust than the old system and should help to streamline many processes. For example, the system will automatically notify you of license application status, license expiration, CE renewal dates and it may even be able to provide a place for you to track your CEs. Data security will be improved, public access to provider information will be improved, it will automate many services that are now manual (just think...you will get your license to practice faster!) and it will allow for electronic access to facility inspections and investigations. It will also house enforcement information. One stop shop!

Currently, they are in the pre-implementation phase, this includes determining the procurement approach and business readiness activities. They plan to have a signed contract with a vendor by July 2020 and implementation is expected to occur in January 2023.

Here is the not so good news, LMTs will likely see an additional fee (as will almost all professions) attached to our license/renewal unless the Board of Massage somehow creates an existing fund balance in the next year or two.

HEAL-WA

According to the DOH website, *"HEALWA assures affordable, anytime, online access to current, authoritative clinical information and educational resources to eligible healthcare practitioners in WA State"*.

There are now 26 eligible provider types that make up the 205,529 eligible users, and the number of users has been growing steadily since the inception of HEALWA. Most recently, veterinarians were added. Why vets you might ask? Well, most diseases found in humans originated in animals!

Here are some of the most recent statistics: subscription costs (for HEALWA) increase about 5% per year, NDs are the most prolific users at 51% of NDs being registered on the site, next was Midwives at 41% of midwives being registered. For LMTs we have 14,145 eligible users and 982 registered users or 6.9%.

As an LMT of 34 years I would really like to see more of us using this resource and using evidence-based information to inform and guide our practices. Also, we should be taking advantage of some of the FREE CEs that are available on this site.

If you are a user of this site and there is a resource that you would love to see on HEAL-WA but can't find, just let me know. Associations have an opportunity to help guide and request the procurement of information for our profession.

If you have any other input for WSMTA to take to HSQA, please email it to: <mailto:mberney@mywsmta.org>. HSQA is increasing the frequency of these exchanges of information with association reps. We plan to meet again in early November. Watch for the next report then.