

# HANDS OFF OUR NAME

## Massage Is Therapy

### LAW ENFORCEMENT TOOLKIT

## Overview

In most states, massage therapists are healthcare providers who are licensed by the state where they practice. State licensing involves attending and passing an approved massage school program, passing a state licensing exam and often background checks. Many state laws say that only a licensed massage therapist can use the term massage/massage therapy, yet many use it to disguise their Illicit Sex and Human Trafficking Businesses Disguised as Massage (ISHT). (They are also often incorrectly called Illicit Massage Businesses or Massage Parlors.)

In many states, a licensed massage therapist is often required to have their license on the wall of the office and their license number listed on their website and advertisements. They also may have photos on their massage licenses or be required to carry ID that matches the license. (Illicit Businesses were placing one license on the wall and having every person say it was their license and did not carry photo ID to match people to the license.) Most states also have massage license verification systems that list all licensed massage therapists and also any actions taken against their license.

There are also laws regarding unlicensed practice of massage therapy in most states, yet the Board of Massage mainly deals with licensed massage therapists and will send the cases to law enforcement to investigate. Penalties are mostly misdemeanors.

## Hiding in Plain Sight

### Hiding in Plain Sight: What to know and look for

So many illicit businesses are hiding in plain sight under signs saying things like Asian Massage, Foot Massage, and are also using simple business names that look like they could be actual licensed massage therapists.

### Asian Massage/Spa

There are often loopholes to the laws that allow people to practice Asian Massage/Bodywork without a massage license. This allows brothels to use the Asian Massage or Chinese massage as a front for their sexually oriented businesses. Asian Massage is actually a

legitimate form of massage. The Asian Bodywork Therapy Profession says legitimate practitioners will not use the term Asian Massage or Chinese Massage. They will use the proper titles for their work such as:

- Acupressure
- Amma
- AMMA Therapy®
- Chi Nei Tsang
- Five Element Shiatsu
- Integrative Eclectic Shiatsu
- Japanese Shiatsu
- Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure®
- Jin Shou Tuina™
- Macrobiotic Shiatsu
- Medical Qigong
- Nuad Bo 'Rarn (Traditional Thai Bodywork)
- Shiatsu
- Shiatsu Anma Therapy
- Tuina
- Zen Shiatsu

### **Foot Massage Spas**

Foot massage places are also a hiding place for illicit sex businesses. Some states have laws that exempt people who do something called Reflexology which is a type of massage for the feet and hands from massage licensing. Illicit Sex Businesses use it as a way to set up businesses exempting themselves from licensing and background checks. They give very low cost foot massage.

### **Thai Massage**

Another common hiding place is businesses that use Thai Massage and related names as a cover for their illicit business. Thai Massage is actually a very real style of massage that originates in Thailand. Many massage therapists will actually go there for training and go on to teach others in the US this special method of massage.

## **The Disruption Plan**

The people who are working in these places may or may not be trafficked but there is a very high likelihood that they are. Your officers will need specific training in learning the signs of human trafficking as well as how to separate out the victims from the traffickers. The trafficked people will need support systems in place to help them live and heal. There are companies providing this training like the Human Trafficking Training Center who will travel to your city and provide training at a very reasonable cost which will allow as many officers to be trained as possible. <https://humantraffickingtrainingcenter.com/>

It will take a team to work on this and keep it going. Contact the Attorney General's office in your state to see if they have a human trafficking task force or find out who in the AG's office is working on this. City Business licensing departments will be helpful in this too. Victim support groups will be needed to help the people being trafficked to find new lives – housing, jobs and healthcare support.

Create Regional Action Committees. Each community has different needs, laws and issues in their community. It is important to get the community involved.

## Hands Off Our Name

The words Massage and Massage Therapy are constantly being used as a cover for these illegal activities. The Media and others will inaccurately refer to these places as Illicit Massage Businesses or Massage Parlors. They are NOT Massage anything. They are Sexually Oriented Businesses Disguised as Massage Businesses (SOBs).

Correcting the use of language and calling them what they are will go a long way in bringing awareness to your community and help everyone to realize that this is a societal issue. The many men who frequent these places make it a very lucrative business for the people who own them.

## Verify Massage Therapy Licenses



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