

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Licensure**

As a result of a recent phone survey, we've collected  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from NC MT-BCs.

### **What is “State Recognition”?**

State recognition is a general term that encompasses three different possibilities. As the name implies, it is the recognition of a particular profession (in this case, music therapy) by the state in its regulations. Three different options include registration, certification, and licensure.

### **What is licensure in North Carolina?**

According to NC General Statute 93B, a license “means any license (other than a privilege license), certificate, or other evidence of qualification which an individual is required to obtain before he may engage in or represent himself to be a member of a particular profession or occupation”.

### **What professions in NC are currently licensed?**

The list of licensed professionals is quite long. Some healthcare professionals that are licensed in NC include:

- Counselors
- Nurses
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Therapists
- Recreation Therapists
- Social Workers
- Speech Therapists

### **What would the benefits of licensure be?**

- Title Protection
- Public Protection

### **What is the difference between certification and licensure?**

Certification “is a nonstatutory process whereby an accrediting body grants recognition to an individual for having met predetermined qualifications”. Licensure “refers to the laws which regulate a given occupation. Its purpose is essentially twofold: (1) title protection...and (2) scope of practice” (Oliver, 2003). State licensure may vary in terms of requirements from state to state. (The Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) has additional information on this at [www.cbmt.org](http://www.cbmt.org)).

**Do we know if MT-BCs are interested in pursuing licensure? Do we know how many MT-BCs would share the cost of licensure?**

The NC Task Force conducted an informal survey of MT-BCs. The results of that survey revealed that 51% of MT-BCs contacted felt supportive of exploring the option of licensure, 28% felt neutral, and 21% felt hesitant.

If music therapy became a licensed profession in NC, all MT-BCs would be required to obtain licensure in order to practice. The fees for this would be equally shared by all MT-BCs (There are approximately 100+ MT-BCs in the state currently).

**Do we have evidence that clients are denied access to music therapy services because MTs are not licensed in NC? Has reimbursement been adversely affected by not having state licensure--what are the current stats for this?**

This is difficult to estimate; however, there are specific instances where a lack of licensure has been problematic:

- Medicaid: a staff member from the Medicaid office contacted members of the Task Force with an interest to include MT in their state plan. The staff member requested that we “look into the issue of licensure” since Medicaid would not be able to reimburse MT-BCs for providing MT who were not licensed
- Grant Funding: 2 MT-BCs who recently met with a private foundation on different occasions were told that it would be “challenging” to receive funding for a grant proposal that was submitted by an unlicensed healthcare professional. One of the reasons that was given for this was the lack of “sustainability” of the grant project, since MT-BCs cannot currently bill Medicaid for MT services following the end of the grant-funded period
- CDSA (Children’s Developmental Services Agency): An MT-BC who was invited to be a provider with a CDSA in NC later was turned down specifically because the MT-BC could not bill Medicaid for MT services. The result was that children who were referred for and in need of music therapy services could not access those services.
- Department of Health and Human Services: In NC state mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse facilities, at least one MT has been told that MTs cannot advance their careers into supervisory or administrative positions because they are not licensed professionals and therefore cannot supervise or manage other licensed professionals (such as recreation therapists).
- DPI (Department of Public Instruction): In a NC county, the public schools attempted to pay the music therapist on the same salary as paraprofessionals since music therapists are not licensed professionals. The rate finally negotiated was substantially less than that paid to licensed professionals in the schools, including teachers and speech, physical, recreation, or occupational therapists.
- Private Insurance: BCBS, the largest provider of health insurance in the state lists the following types of providers who may apply for credentialing:
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Doctor of Dentistry (DDS) (DMD), Doctor of Podiatry (DPM), Doctor of Optometry (OD), Doctor of Chiropractic (DC), Doctor of Psychology (PhD), Physical Therapists (PT), Occupational Therapists (OT), Nurse Midwives (CNM), Audiologists (MA), Physician’s Assistant (PA), Pastoral Counselors (PC), Licensed Certified Social Worker (LCSW), Certified Nurse Specialist (CNS), Speech and Language

Pathologist (SLP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (CSAC), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Psychological Associate, and Licensed Dietician Nutritionist (LDN).

- All are licensed by the state, with the exception of substance abuse counselor, which requires a high school diploma and state certification. Music therapists are eligible for neither credentialing nor reimbursement by BCBS at this time.

(Please note, some MT-BCs in NC have incorporated goals under the habilitation scope of Home and Community Supports (CAP-MR/DD waiver), however they are not billing for “music therapy” services and are not reimbursed at a professional rate—the state of NC identifies “professionals” as those having “licensure”).

**Would every MT-BC have to be licensed if we decided to pursue licensure?**

Yes, if a MT licensure law was established in NC, all MT-BCs who wish to practice in the state would have to apply for licensure to practice MT in the state.

**Do we have figures for developing licensure and for annual maintenance of licensure?**

Currently, we do not have figures for licensure and associated fees for MT in NC. Other professions have licensure rates that range from \$100-\$150 per year; however these rates may or may not be applicable to MT-BCs.

**Has anyone spoken with MTs in other states where licensure has been implemented to learn of the assets and liabilities for developing and maintaining licensure?**

The State Task Force is working closely with Judy Simpson (AMTA) and Dena Register (CBMT) regarding this topic. At this time, no state offers a license for music therapists. Wisconsin offers a state registry and New York offers a Creative Arts Therapist License for masters level professionals under the Mental Health Practitioners Board. Our newest member to the Task Force, Ali Chandler, MM, MT-BC, LCAT, has personal knowledge of the recent Creative Arts Therapist License in NY. Finally, one of our state members, Cathy McKinney, PhD, LCAT, MT-BC, FAMI, is well acquainted with the licensure issues faced by NY and NJ from her work chairing the AMTA Education and Training Advisory Board.

**Has a plan been developed for grandfathering and annual requirements for licensure?**

At this time, no plan has been developed. Should NC MT-BCs decide to move in this direction, an open dialogue would be encouraged to determine the best course of action.

**What are the minimum requirements for a competent MT in NC?**

AMTA, CBMT, and the Task Force are proposing that music therapists would likely continue to adhere to the Scope of Practice outlined by the Certification Board for Music Therapists.

**Has a plan been developed for quality control with licensing?**

The Task Force proposes that this would be maintained the way that it is currently maintained by CBMT but the state licensing board would receive and could act on any complaints for music therapists in NC.

**Has a plan been developed for potential lawsuits from clients, referral sources, disgruntled therapists, upset families, etc? Do we have the financial resources to survive any lawsuits?**

At this time, it is our understanding that if the state creates a licensing board for a profession, the state covers the costs of responding to citizens concerns involving that profession. These potential costs would be covered through licensing fees.

**Do we have multiple resources for MT-BCs to obtain malpractice insurance as a friendly resource of information for our practicing clinicians?**

Currently, MT-BCs have several options for obtaining professional liability insurance: MARSH and HPSO.

**Have we obtained other professionals' licensing information for a guide for good licensing practices within NC?**

Yes, the Task Force has identified the licensing laws of other professions in NC and has been in dialogue with the Recreation Therapy Licensing Board (They became licensed in 2005.)

**Have we surveyed other professionals for what works and what doesn't work in the realm of state licensure in NC? (Pitfalls and Successes)**

The State Task Force is currently surveying MT-BCs and has not surveyed other professionals at this time. Should NC MT-BCs choose to explore the option of licensure in more detail, the Task Force would be happy to look into this.

Oliver, S. (2003). Certification vs. licensure: What are the differences? *BC status*. Downingtown, PA: Certification Board for Music Therapists.