

New Requirements for Massage Establishments and Massage Technicians

Frequently Asked Questions



On February 4, 2020, the County of Los Angeles (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) approved new requirements for massage establishments. Massage technicians must comply with these requirements to obtain or retain their Business License.

Below are frequently asked questions received by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) and the County's Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTC). The answers are intended to help massage establishment owners understand and comply with the new requirements for obtaining a Public Health Permit and Business License.

These new requirements only apply to businesses located in the **unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County**.

To determine whether your business is located in an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County, visit:

- <http://gis.lacounty.gov/districtlocator/> and enter your business address, **or**
- <https://lavote.net/apps/precinctsmaps> and select "District Map Look Up by Address" from the drop-down menu under "Precincts Maps Application."

Department of Public Health

1. Who is required to obtain a Public Health Permit?

In general, any business that provides massage services for compensation (money) is required to obtain a Public Health Permit. For a list of exceptions, please visit:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/business/massage-establishments.htm>

2. How do I obtain a Public Health Permit?

A Public Health Permit will be issued to a massage establishment after all requirements have been met and a site evaluation has been completed. For additional information, please visit:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh>.

3. How much is the Public Health Permit fee?

The annual Public Health Permit fee and site evaluation fee for massage establishments can be found in the [Public Health and Financial Management Fee Schedule](https://bit.ly/EH-FeeSchedule). (bit.ly/EH-FeeSchedule)

4. If I already have a California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC) certification, why do I need a Public Health Permit?

The CAMTC certifies the massage therapists; it does not regulate the operation of massage establishments or their requirements. A Public Health Permit ensures that a massage establishment has undergone a site evaluation and meets all applicable health and safety code requirements.

5. Why are inspections needed?

Regular inspections of massage establishments help ensure compliance with the County's new law, including business license and Public Health Permit requirements. Inspections help ensure the safe and legal operation of massage establishments in the unincorporated areas of the County and in local cities that adapt the new law.

6. When will inspections start?

Public Health staff will conduct a site evaluation before any inspections take place. Public Health will issue a Public Health Permit once the massage establishment meets all applicable health and safety code requirements. After a massage establishment receives a Public Health Permit, it may be inspected at any time during the year. For additional questions about the Public Health Permit, please call **(888) 700-9995** or email Massageestablishment@ph.lacounty.gov.

Treasurer and Tax Collector

1. When will the new massage establishment requirements take effect?

The new requirements took effect on March 4, 2020.

2. Are there any restrictions on where I can operate a massage establishment?

Yes. There are zoning and land use restrictions that apply to the location of a massage establishment. Before signing a lease and applying for the required licenses and/or permits, please contact the County Department of Regional Planning (DRP) to determine whether you may operate a massage establishment at your intended location. The DRP can be reached at zoningldcc@planning.lacounty.gov or **(213) 974-6411**.

3. Can I use a home-based residence as the location for my massage establishment business?

No. You may not use your home or anyone else's home as the location of your massage establishment. Both the DRP and the TTC will deny your application if the proposed business location is a residence. The County's zoning laws prohibit the operation of a massage establishment from a residence.

4. Why is the County enacting these new requirements for massage establishments and technicians?

The Board has determined that preventing and addressing human trafficking is a top priority for the County. Violations of laws related to public health, wage and labor, and public safety are often an integral part of human trafficking. The Board also recognizes that, when operated professionally and legally, massage establishments provide valuable health and therapeutic services to the public. However, massage establishments have historically been associated with illicit activities, including prostitution, vice-related offenses, and other violations that may involve human trafficking.

The new requirements are intended to help prevent human trafficking and other abuses in massage establishments through enhanced business licensing and Public Health Permit requirements. These requirements include, but are not limited to, inspections, reporting requirements, operational restrictions, and coordination with law enforcement.

5. Who do the new requirements apply to?

The new requirements apply to new and existing massage establishment owners and certain massage technicians who provide massage services in the unincorporated areas of the County and in the cities of Malibu, Santa Clarita, and Westlake Village.

6 What are the new massage establishment requirements?

At a high level, the new requirements include:

- California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC) certification for massage practitioners who provide massage services in private rooms or areas with doors, curtains, or other barriers that can be closed.
- Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTC) Massage Technician Business License for technicians provide massage services only in open areas.
- Unobstructed windows at massage establishments.
- No sleeping areas on the premises.
- Clients may enter only through the front door.
- Payment can be accepted only in the reception area.
- A human trafficking notice must be posted in a visible location. (Information about the notice can be found at <https://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/model-notice>.)
- A list of services, including the cost and duration of each service, must be displayed in a visible location inside the establishment. Advertising, including online advertising, may not suggest that services other than those listed in the establishment are available.
- Massage establishments must obtain a Public Health Permit from Public Health to operate legally.

7. Will I need anything other than the licenses listed above to operate a massage establishment?

Yes. In addition, massage establishments must obtain a Public Health Permit from Public Health to operate legally.

8. What does the Human Trafficking Notice requirement entail?

California law requires certain businesses, such as massage establishments, to post a Human Trafficking Notice in a highly visible location. The notice informs the public and victims of human trafficking about telephone hotline numbers they can use to seek help or report unlawful activity (California Civil Code Section 52.6). There are specific posting requirements, language requirements, and penalties for failing to post the notice. The required notice is available for download at <https://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/model-notice>. Each business must post the notice in English, Spanish, and a third language.

9. Do I need both a Public Health Permit and a TTC Massage Establishment Business License before I can operate?

Yes. You must have both to comply with the new requirements.

10. If I am an existing business, how much time do I have to obtain a Public Health Permit?

Existing businesses had until July 2, 2020, to obtain a Public Health Permit.

11. How long will it take to receive a Public Health Permit?

Public Health will issue a Public Health Permit after the business meets all applicable health and safety requirements and provides proof of a valid business license.

12. How do I know whether the massage technicians at my establishment require Massage Technician Business Licenses or CAMTC certifications?

Massage technicians who provide massages services in private rooms with doors, curtains, or other barriers that can be closed must obtain CAMTC certification by March 4, 2022.

If your establishment has only open areas, massage technicians are required to obtain a TTC Massage Technician Business License by March 4, 2022.

13. Am I required to have a manager on the premises during hours of operation, and does the manager need to have a Manager Business License?

Yes. A manager must be on the premises during operating hours. However, a Manager Business License is not required.

14. Do I need to reapply every year to renew my Massage Establishment Business License?

Yes. You must submit a new application each year and receive annual approval from the Los Angeles County Business License Commission to continue operating.

15. Will there be a Public Health inspection every year?

Yes. As part of the annual renewal process, massage establishments must pass a Public Health inspection each year.

16. Who can I contact if I have more questions or need to apply for a Business License?

You can contact the TTC Business License Section at **(213) 974-2011** or businesslicense@ttc.lacounty.gov.

New Requirements for Massage Technicians

1. When will the new massage technician requirements be implemented?

The new requirements went into effect on March 4, 2020.

2. What are the new massage technician requirements?

The County now has a two-tier system of identifying massage technicians, with separate requirements for each tier, as follows:

Tier 1 - Massage Technicians

- A Massage Technician Business License issued by the County Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTC) is required for massage technicians who provide massage services in open areas only.
- A criminal background check is not required for massage technicians.
- Two years of experience, or an equivalent combination of education and experience, is required **before** applying for a license.
- Massage technicians will have until March 4, 2022, to become compliant.

Tier 2 - Professionals

- California Massage Therapy Council (CAMTC) certification is required for massage therapists or massage practitioners who will provide massage services in private rooms that can be closed.
- Applicants must apply with CAMTC for certification; no County business license is required.
- Massage therapists and massage practitioners have until March 4, 2022, to become compliant.

3. What are the educational and experienced requirements for obtaining a Massage Technician Business License?

You must meet one of the following requirements to obtain a Massage Technician Business License:

- Education only: 500 education hours from a massage therapy school that complies with the requirements under the California Business and Professions Code, Section 4604.
- Education and work experience: Two years of combined education and work experience.
- Work experience only: Two years of massage therapy experience.

4. Do education programs outside California qualify as CAMTC-approved programs?

No. Schools outside of California do not qualify toward the 500-hour requirement for CAMTC approval.

5. Do the new massage technician requirements apply to me?

Yes. If you are not certified by CAMTC, these requirements apply to you.

6. Who is exempt from the licensing requirements?

Medical professionals, such as physicians, surgeons, and physical therapists, are exempt. Additionally, barbers and cosmetologists who have a valid license under state law are exempt if their massage services are limited to

the neck, face, scalp, hands, or feet. For a complete list of the exemptions, please review the County Ordinance.

7. Who is required to obtain a CAMTC certification?

If you plan to provide massage services in private rooms that can be closed, you are required to obtain a CAMTC certification. Massage technicians seeking CAMTC certification must complete a 500-hour massage therapy education program accredited by CAMTC. A list of CAMTC-approved schools can be found at <https://www.camtc.org/schools.aspx>, or you may contact CAMTC at (916) 669-5336.

8. Who is not required to obtain a CAMTC certification?

If you do not plan to provide massage services in private rooms that can be closed, you are not required to obtain CAMTC certification. However, you are required to obtain a Massage Technician Business License from the TTC if you provide massage services in an open area of a massage establishment.

9. If I am certified through the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Body Work (NCBTMB), am I exempt from any of the proposed licensing requirements?

No. Your national certification from NCBTMB is a voluntary certification, not a license. Licenses are issued by government entities and provide licensed professionals with specific authority to use a protected title and/or perform specific services.

10. What if I work at an establishment that has open areas *and* private rooms capable of being closed? Am I required to be CAMTC-certified?

It depends. If you will provide massage services in private rooms that can be closed, you must be CAMTC-certified. If you plan to work **only** in open areas, you only need a Massage Technician Business License from the TTC.

11. Where can I get more information about the clothing requirements?

Please review Section 11.36.070 of the County Code for additional information. You can access the information at https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/.

12. If I am an existing massage technician, how much time do I have to obtain CAMTC certification or a TTC Massage Technician Business License?

You have until March 4, 2022, to obtain CAMTC certification or a TTC Massage Technician Business License.

13. If I am a new massage technician, how much time do I have to obtain CAMTC certification or a TTC Massage Technician Business License?

You have until March 4, 2022, to obtain CAMTC certification or a TTC Massage Technician Business License.

14. What happens if I don't meet the new massage technician requirements by the deadline?

You risk losing your business license and may no longer be able to operate as a massage technician within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County or in the cities of Malibu, Santa Clarita, and Westlake Village. Additionally, if you apply for a business license in another county, the local licensing authority may deny your license application.

15. Are there continuing education requirements for maintaining my Massage Technician Business License?

No. Continuing education is not required to maintain a Massage Technician Business License.

16. Does the new Public Health Permit requirement apply to massage technicians?

No. The Public Health Permit requirement applies only to massage establishments.

17. Am I allowed to practice out of my own home?

No. Zoning laws prohibit massage-based businesses from operating in homes.

18. Who can I contact if I have further questions or need to apply for a business license?

You can contact the TTC Business License Section at **(213) 974-2011** or businesslicense@ttc.lacounty.gov.

For questions or comments regarding the Public Health Permit requirements for massage establishments, you can call **(626) 430-5205** to speak with a representative or email permitfees@ph.lacounty.gov.