



## ADVOCATE FOR MASSAGE THERAPY AS A RECOGNIZED AND RESPECTED HEALTHCARE PROFESSION

September 5, 2019

**To:** Stephanie Dickey, LMT, Chair, and Members of the Board of Massage

**From:** Comments Submitted by the WSMTA Government Relations Program

**Re: a) Somatic Education Training Program Application Revision and b) the Body Intelligence application for Somatic Education Exemption**

### **Somatic Education Training Program Application Revision:**

RCW 18.108.050 subsection (6) Exemptions, state that RCW 18.108 does not apply to:

- (a) Individuals who have completed a somatic education training program approved by the secretary.
- (b) For purposes of this subsection (6), "somatic education" means: Using minimal touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement and suggest new possibilities of movement; and using minimal touch over specific points of the body to facilitate balance in the nervous system. It includes: (i) Any somatic education training program approved by the secretary as of July 23, 2017; (ii) the practice of ortho-bionomy; and (iii) the Feldenkrais method of somatic education.

WSMTA recommends that somewhere on the application for "Somatic Education Training Program Application" form, which provides an exemption from massage therapy training, that there be a section requesting an explanation provided by the applicant for how the applicant's program qualifies as "somatic education". We would request either the Department of Health or the Board of Massage, consider making this a two-part form:

- The first part is to determine if the program actually qualifies as "somatic education".
- The second part is to determine if the standards of practice, training accreditation process, instructor certification process and practitioner certification process meet requirements as requested in WAC 246-830-485.

### **Body Intelligence Application for Exemption as Somatic Education:**

WSMTA advises the Board of Massage to consider denying an exemption for the Body Intelligence program since it is not a somatic education program. In RCW 18.108.050 subsection (6b) somatic education is defined as, "...Using minimal touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement and suggest new possibilities of movement; and using minimal touch over specific points of the body to facilitate balance in the nervous system." Body Intelligence teaches biodynamic craniosacral therapy, which is a "hands-on form of bodywork" that can affect many different aspects of the body.

In Appendix A, we have provided information about several well known somatic education programs -- which includes Feldenkrais, Hanna Somatics, Continuum and Alexander Technique. We copied information directly from their websites to describe the work they do and we provided the website link for each to show where the information came from so Board Members could easily look up the information. We also provided a link for a Youtube.com video for each modality as the website descriptions aren't always descriptive of what a practitioner is doing in a session. When compared to these modalities, craniosacral therapy, to include the Body Intelligence version, is vastly different.

The beginning of craniosacral history is generally attributed to the cranial work done by Osteopathic Dr. William Sutherland in the 1800s and then was refined by a variety of people after the 1960's, including Osteopathic Physician John Upledger in the 1970s. The biodynamic form of craniosacral therapy generally claims Franklyn Sills as it's more direct founder who studied with osteopaths in the UK in the 1970s and then formed his own school. There are many groups both affiliated with Franklyn Sills and unaffiliated that claim to be biodynamic craniosacral programs around the world and associate with him as the founder or use his writings or instruction as the basis for their work. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of craniosacral therapy programs that exist around the world today.

In craniosacral bodywork, the therapist has direct contact with the client when practicing their work. For craniosacral therapists, hand placement is very key. Therapists have to know their anatomy and develop, with time, a keen sense of touch. Unlike basic massage, such as Swedish Massage, craniosacral therapists are not pushing through tissues to make change, they use touch and pressure to feel, assess and "follow" or "unwind" structures to allow change to occur that the client's body informs the practitioner needs to happen. There are other forms of bodywork that also use a similar to touch to follow or unwind, mostly relating to structural bodywork or myofascial release. Sometimes, craniosacral therapists just sit with the tissue to feel the craniorythmic impulse. Except when the craniosacral therapist moves position, there isn't much in the way of actual movement happening with a craniosacral therapist's hands. However, there can be some fairly dramatic effects to the client on the table or not, depending on what the needs of the client are.

For example, one of the hot topics of the day in any massage and bodywork modality is visceral work. Biodynamic craniosacral therapy also has instructors who teach how to impact the mobility (alignment) and motility (the movement of an organ while functioning) of the body's various organs. This is done with the therapist's hand placement on the body through touch. This is not done by using somatic education, the client is not using movement of their own body to make change. This is done through the hands of the craniosacral therapist on the body of the client who is supine change is affected via touch and pressure and movement of their hands that is so minimal that the client on the table doesn't feel anything happening and a person watching doesn't really see anything happening.

With an appropriately trained biodynamic craniosacral therapist, this type of bodywork also uses decompression techniques, it also can affect the dura mater and can affect vertebral and other bony joint alignment. For not much effort on the part of the biodynamic craniosacral therapist, fairly significant change can happen in a client's body.

## **Recommendations**

WSMTA is not stating an opinion on the quality of the education provided by the Body Intelligence program, other than to say that it is a member of the International Affiliation of Biodynamic Trainings which has an excellent reputation. We are only stating that craniosacral therapy, whether biodynamic or other, is not somatic education as any change that occurs in the body of the client is through the direct touch of the therapist, not through the direction of the therapist to have their client move their body in a focused manner to experience nervous system re-education as occurs with somatic education.

Therefore, WSMTA is asking the Board of Massage to not approve the Body Intelligence application for Somatic Education Exemption. In the state of Washington, craniosacral therapy has always been treated as a form of bodywork that is learned after a person has become a massage therapist and we ask the Board of Massage to continue to do so for the protection of the general public.

Should the Board of Massage wish to hear expert testimony from other biodynamic craniosacral therapy instructors, we can arrange for this to happen. We could also provide snippets from biodynamic craniosacral certification program student handouts if needed showing that what is being taught to students demonstrates that craniosacral therapy is a hands-on form of bodywork.

Thank you for your consideration,



Robbin Blake, LMT WSMTA Board Member and Government Relations Director

## Appendix A -- Known Somatic Education Providers

### Feldenkrais Method

<https://feldenkrais.com/about-the-feldenkrais-method/>

"The Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education uses gentle movement and directed attention to help people learn new and more effective ways of living the life they want. You can increase your ease and range of motion, improve your flexibility and coordination, and rediscover your innate capacity for graceful, efficient movement. Since how you move, is how you move through life, these improvements will often enhance your thinking, emotional regulation, and problem-solving capabilities."

*This section is an insert by WSMTA. If you have never seen a Feldenkrais session, you will see the Feldenkrais practitioner provide verbal instruction and watch the client use movement to explore within their body. Sometimes the practitioner might give a physical cue of touch to draw attention, but primarily it is the client who is activating movement at the cuing of the Feldenkrais practitioner. The following Youtube.com video is a good example of a Feldenkrais Lesson -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtCnFWtWxyM>*

### Association for Hanna Somatics Education Inc:

[https://hannasomatics.com/index.php/about\\_somatics/what\\_is\\_somatics/](https://hannasomatics.com/index.php/about_somatics/what_is_somatics/)

"Hanna Somatic Education® (also known as Hanna Somatics) is a rapidly effective form of neuromuscular (mind-body training) movement re-education that goes directly to the root cause of most chronic muscular pain: the brain and the way in which it senses and organizes the muscles and movement. By learning to regain both awareness, sensation, and motor control of muscles – an educational process that can only be achieved through movement – the brain can remember how to relax and move the muscles properly. This process of sensory motor training creates improved muscle function and enhanced sensory awareness.

Hanna Somatic Education® is a safe, gentle and common sense approach to reverse chronic pain. It is the only method of pain relief and sensory motor training that targets the condition of SENSORY MOTOR AMNESIA (SMA).

Sensory Motor Amnesia is the condition of chronically-tight muscles that have learned to stay contracted due to repeated and reflexive response to stress such as accidents, injuries, surgeries, repetitive tasks, and on-going emotional stress. The resulting patterns of muscular contraction that develop result in such common conditions as chronic back pain, neck, shoulder and hip pain, limited mobility, joint pain, poor posture, shallow breathing, and uneven leg length."

*This section is an insert by WSMTA. The following video on Youtube.com is extremely useful for understanding Hanna Somatics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1MoLgUnBBA>*

### Continuum Movement

<https://continuummovement.com/mission-value-statements/>

"Core values of Continuum Movement:

- Central goals of Continuum Movement are the creation of health and wellness, freeing oneself from the cultural and mechanistic constraints of modern society. Continuum Movement maintains that movement is the message and the messenger
- To access and flourish from an internal experience of our biology using breath, sound, and somatic based movement. It thrives on openness and a curiosity about what is possible. Movement is not something that we do, movement is what we are, and it is a way to learn to move our presence further into the unknown.
- To motivate curiosity, creativity, innovation, health and tapping into the human potential by allowing the body to lead the way through sound, breath and movement.

- Continuum's somatic process connects us to the primordial, cultural and cosmic fields,. interconnecting with the natural world.
- To create health, wellness, and innovation by accessing the body's essential fluid system to free oneself from cultural and mechanistic constraints of modern living.
- Water is the most resonant element in the cosmos. Water's fluid interplay of movement carries information that shapes our being. The fact that our body is composed mostly of water is significant in our capacity to be self-referential, transformational, and better able to effortlessly respond to circumstance by cultivating an open bio-system/organism.
- A bio-creative process of learning to fluidly meet any limit, in any aspect of our living, by exploring our natural state incorporating breath, sound, and somatic based movement as natural resources of meaningfulness.
- Continuum is a process of refining our ability to sense, feel, experience and consciously respond with more versatility to whatever is going on, and to give an individual the resources to explore the less known aspects of oneself.
- “. . . I can feel the waters of my eternal ocean beckoning to me with sweeps of wave motion. . . . My head disappears under water, my hands become a blur, my 'body' is permeable, and my skin no longer wraps around me. I am this water. I am these waves .” — **Emilie Conrad.**

*This section is an insert by WSMTA. The first 4 or so minutes of the following video on Youtube.com is extremely useful for understanding Continuum Movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBVbbFyZli8>*

### **Alexander Technique**

<https://www.amsatonline.org/aws/AMSAT/pt/sp/faqs>

"What happens in a lesson?"

In an Alexander Technique lesson, your teacher instructs you — with verbal and manual guidance — to approach movement differently. You will learn to recognize habit patterns that may be interfering with ease and flexibility and you'll learn how to discontinue them. No special clothing needed - normal street attire is appropriate.

There are two parts to a lesson:

Table work

To more easily experience the body's muscles in a neutral state, part of the lesson takes place lying down (fully clothed) on a lightly padded table - on your back with your knees bent. Your teacher will teach you how to recognize and release any unnecessary tension you may be holding, promoting an enlivened sensory awareness and quieting the nervous system. You are an active participant: your eyes are open and conversation takes place.

Guidance during activity

Using simple activities such as sitting, standing, walking, speaking and reaching, your teacher gives you verbal, visual and physical cues to help you perform those activities with greater ease and efficiency. Guiding you in movement, your teacher will elicit your body's capacity for dynamic expansion and you will learn how to maintain that ease and freedom on your own. What you learn applies to all activities in your life, but you are welcome to work with your teacher on particular activities of interest such as lifting and carrying, computer work, public speaking, your favorite sport or even sleeping position. Actors may choose to work on a monologue, singers an aria, violinists a challenging passage, dancers a movement. In any activity you bring to a lesson - swinging a tennis racket, lifting a child or sitting in front of a computer - you learn to apply the principles of the Alexander Technique to reduce compression and increase overall ease and proficiency."

*This section is an insert by WSMTA. The following video on Youtube.com is useful for understanding what a lesson with Alexander Technique is like: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXqluvav5hY>*