

Subtitle 65 BOARD OF MASSAGE THERAPY EXAMINERS

10.65.12 Handheld Tools

Authority: Health Occupations Article, §§6-101(f)(2)(ii) and 6-206(a)(1), Annotated Code of Maryland

Notice of Proposed Action

[26-028-P]

The Secretary of Health proposes to adopt new Regulations **.01— .04** under a new chapter, **COMAR 10.65.12 Handheld Tools**. This action was considered by the Board of Massage Therapy Examiners at a public meeting held on January 28, 2026, notice of which was given by publication on the Board’s website at health.maryland.gov/massage/Pages/home.aspx pursuant to General Provisions Article, §3–302(c), Annotated Code of Maryland.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this action is to add a new chapter for handheld tools pursuant to Ch. 788, Acts of 2024.

Estimate of Economic Impact

The proposed action has no economic impact.

Economic Impact on Small Businesses

The proposed action has minimal or no economic impact on small businesses.

Impact on Individuals with Disabilities

The proposed action has no impact on individuals with disabilities.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Comments may be sent to Jordan Fisher Blotter, Director, Office of Regulation and Policy Coordination, Maryland Department of Health, 201 West Preston Street, Room 534 Baltimore, Maryland 21201, or call 410-767-0938, or email to mdh.regs@maryland.gov. Comments will be accepted through May 18, 2026. A public hearing has not been scheduled.

.01 Scope.

Pursuant to Health Occupations Article, §6-101(f)(2)(ii), Annotated Code of Maryland, this chapter establishes standards for the use of instrument-assisted soft tissue manipulation techniques, also known as handheld tools, by a licensed massage therapist or a registered massage therapist.

.02 Definitions.

A. In this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

B. Terms Defined.

(1) “Board” means the State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners.

(2) Handheld Tool.

(a) “Handheld tool” means an instrument that is used by a licensee in the practice of massage therapy to enhance or imitate manual techniques.

(b) “Handheld tool” includes a:

(i) Mechanized vibration instrument; or

(ii) Muscle-scraping tool.

(c) “Handheld tool” does not include a tool exclusively used for protective self-care, including a:

(i) Thumb-saver tool;

(ii) Trigger point tool; or

(iii) Still point inducer.

(3) “Licensee” means, unless the context requires otherwise, a licensed massage therapist or a registered massage practitioner authorized by the Board to practice massage therapy.

(4) “Practice massage therapy” has the meaning stated in Health Occupations Article, §6-101(f), Annotated Code of Maryland.

.03 Minimum Education and Training Requirements.

A. In order to use handheld tools, a licensee shall meet the requirements of this regulation.

B. A licensee shall complete a minimum of 8 hours of instruction that substantially encompasses the following content areas:

- (1) Philosophy and historical perspective of handheld tools and massage therapy treatment;
- (2) Indications, contra-indications, and qualifications for handheld tools in the practice of massage therapy;
- (3) Licensee and patient safety when using handheld tools;
- (4) Case management and jurisprudence when using handheld tools;
- (5) Recordkeeping, specifically detailing implementation and specific location of instrument use; and
- (6) The clinical use of muscle scraping and mechanized vibration tools in the practice of massage therapy.

C. The coursework required by this regulation shall be in addition to the 750 contact hours of education required by Health Occupations Article, §6-302, Annotated Code of Maryland.

.04 Standards of Practice.

A. A licensee using handheld tools to practice massage therapy shall:

- (1) Fully explain and demonstrate the use of the handheld tool to the client in advance of the tool's use;
- (2) Obtain informed written consent specific to the handheld tool and maintain that written consent within the client's record;
- (3) Utilize handheld tools in a manner consistent with the standards set forth in the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Act, Labor and Employment Article, Title 5, Annotated Code of Maryland, and its associated regulations;
- (4) Document the use of handheld tool therapy in accordance with COMAR 10.65.06;
- (5) Be responsible for the ongoing evaluation, assessment, and re-evaluation of client impairments;
- (6) Only use handheld tools on parts of the body with neuromuscular or musculoskeletal links to those impairments; and
- (7) Maintain continuing competence for handheld tool usage.

B. Any violation of these standards of practice or of the requirements of this chapter may subject the licensee to discipline pursuant to Health Occupations Article, §6-308, Annotated Code of Maryland.

MEENA SESHAMANI, MD, PHD
Secretary of Health