

**Chapter: Benefits**

**Legislative authority: section 111**

*Prevention statement*

*Preventing injuries is one of the most important responsibilities in the workplace. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (the 'Act') establishes the responsibilities of all workplace parties to work together to ensure the physical and psychological health and safety of workers. When injuries do occur, workers and employers must continue to work together to facilitate an injured worker's early and safe return to health and work.*

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## Purpose

This policy establishes parameters for the authorization and safe use of massage therapy in the treatment of work-related injuries.

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## Definitions

**board** means the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board

**case management team** means a team that assists the worker with their recovery, early and safe return to work plan and, if needed, vocational rehabilitation. The team always includes the worker and the board. Employers have a duty to co-operate in their worker's early and safe return to work and will be encouraged to use participation on the Case Management Team to facilitate that duty. The team can also include up to two representatives of the worker (chosen by the worker), case manager and the health care providers. Other members may be added depending on their specific roles and responsibilities

**daily living activities** means a person's actions that contribute to self- maintenance (such as performing personal hygiene, dressing, walking and working)

**function** means a mode of activity or action that permits the body to do its job (for example, a fully functioning hand allows the person to grasp, hold, lift, manipulate and set down objects)

**health care provider** means

- a. a medical practitioner; or
- b. a health care provider recognized by the board.

**massage therapist** means an individual who provides therapeutic massage treatment. To provide treatment to workers in Yukon, a massage therapist must be recognized by the board as a legitimate service provider. In recognition that there is no formal licensing body in Yukon, massage therapists must sign an individual service agreement with the board, and continue to meet all standards (such as having a clean and safe workplace) identified in the Service Agreement

**non-therapeutic massage** means a broader range of massage therapy techniques (such as 'healing touch') or objectives (relaxation massage for general stress reduction) available in the marketplace. Non-therapeutic massage is not within the scope of this policy

**primary health care** means the entry point to the health care system, whether through a medical practitioner or health care provider who is able to diagnose and treat a patient without a referral from a medical practitioner (for example, a physiotherapist or chiropractor)

**service agreement** means an agreement between the board and a massage therapist carrying on individually, in partnership or as a limited corporation

**therapeutic massage** means the assessment of soft tissues and joints, and the treatment and prevention of dysfunction, injury, pain and physical disorders of the soft tissues and joints by manual and physical methods to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment physical function to relieve pain and promote health

**worker** means a person who performs work or services for an employer under a contract of service or apprenticeship, written, or oral, express or implied and as further defined in section 77 of the Act

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## Policy statement

### 1. General

The board may provide a worker with health care assistance, including services, devices or equipment that are necessary to grant relief from a work-related injury. All questions as to the necessity, character and sufficiency of any health care assistance are determined solely by the board.

The board supports the provision of necessary and appropriate therapeutic massage treatment services to:

- a. promote, as a companion to primary treatment provided by a physiotherapist or chiropractor, effective recovery from a work-related injury;

- b. regain function in order to remain at work or enable early and safe return to work for workers; and
- c. reduce the severity of symptoms and maintain function (where the work injury continues to have a significant impact on daily living activities after the worker reaches maximum medical improvement).

### *1.1 Coverage of cost of therapeutic massage*

The board may cover the cost of therapeutic massage treatment under this policy, where treatment:

- a. is provided by a massage therapist who is a signatory to an individual Agreement for Therapeutic Massage Services (Service Agreement) with the board or is an employee/contractor of a signatory to the Service Agreement; and
- b. is provided pursuant to a referral from a medical practitioner, chiropractor or a physiotherapist.

## **2. Authorizing payment for massage therapy – key provisions**

The board may authorize payment for therapeutic massage treatment after a work-related injury where this treatment:

- a. is appropriate to address the worker's acute injury-related medical needs arising out of their work-related injury;
- b. is provided in concert with other care (such as physiotherapy);
- c. supports the goals of timely recovery and return of function;
- d. is expected to maintain or improve the worker's function, thus preventing further disability;
- e. focuses on musculoskeletal function;
- f. helps the worker stay at work while recovering from a work-related injury (if possible), or fosters a timely, safe and successful return to work;
- g. is provided by a massage therapist who has signed a Service Agreement with the board; and
- h. is obtained by a referral from a medical practitioner, chiropractor or a physiotherapist.

### 3. Mitigation

Workers must take personal responsibility for their recovery, and co-operate with treatment plans, health care providers and the board (see policies 4.2 through 4.5 Duty to Co-operate). They must also mitigate any loss caused by their injury.

Mitigation of loss includes the worker staying at work where safe to do so and where functional abilities allow (see policy 2.5 Mitigation of Loss).

Where therapeutic massage treatment is included in a worker's recovery, typical examples of the worker's mitigation of injury include:

- a. attending all scheduled appointments or immediately informing the board when unable to attend;
- b. following the medical practitioner and massage therapist's recommendations, including any prescribed exercises (such as stretching) between appointments; and
- c. communicating progress or concerns with the board and their medical practitioner.

Failure to mitigate loss may result in reduction, suspension or termination of benefits (see policy 4.5 Duty to Co-Operate, Part 4 of 4: Penalties for Non Co-Operation).

### 4. Eligibility

The board may authorize therapeutic massage treatment necessary for treating a worker with a work-related injury where it is appropriate and in the following circumstances:

- a. as soon as reasonably practicable after the work-related injury, and in conjunction with other primary treatment;
- b. as soon as medically recommended after surgery for the work-related injury or subsequent related condition (see policy 2.8 Subsequent Injuries, Disorders or Conditions);
- c. as soon as medically recommended after a recurrence of a work-related injury; or
- d. where a worker has recovered to the point of maximum medical improvement and
  - i. where the work-related injury has a significant impact on daily living activities;
  - ii. where therapeutic massage treatment is determined to be appropriate in order to reduce the severity of symptoms or maintain function and mobility; and

- iii. there is a medical recommendation for therapeutic massage treatment.

## 5. Duration of treatment

The board may provide coverage for a maximum number of treatments as set out in the Service Agreement with the massage therapist.

As required in the Service Agreement, the massage therapist must submit a written request, with rationale, to the board for a treatment extension. The board may authorize an extension of treatment where it is identified as necessary in the progress report or treatment plan of the referring health care provider.

## 6. Concluding therapeutic massage therapy treatment

The board may end authorization for therapeutic massage treatment in the following circumstances:

- a. when there is no evidence that the treatment supports improvement in functional abilities;
- b. where evidence-based guidelines (such as the Medical Disability Advisor) indicate that therapeutic massage treatment is not useful for treatment;
- c. when the treatment focus has moved away from regaining function as related to the work-related injury; or
- d. where there is no reasonable expectation of further improvement with an extension of treatment.

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## History

HC-05 Therapeutic Massage Therapy, effective January 1, 2010, revoked July 1, 2022

HC-01 Complementary Treatments, effective July 1, 2008, revoked January 1, 2010

CL-55 Complementary Treatments, effective July 12, 2005, revoked July 1, 2008