

United States Organization of Licensed Massage Therapists
(USOLMT)
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PUBLIC NOTICE & STATEMENT

RE: DESHAUN WATSON, NFL QUARTERBACK CASE

Recent media reports regarding the allegations against NFL quarterback Deshaun Watson bring with them great concern for massage professionals in the United States.

The most concerning part, thus far, is that Mr. Watson's attorney went public with a statement saying that "happy endings are not a crime". You can hear the video clip for yourself here:

[Happy Endings are Not a Crime](#)

The latest news stories state that Mr. Watson saw 66 different massage therapists over a period of 17 months, 24 of whom have filed lawsuits or criminal complaints against him, accompanied by claims that Mr. Watson exposed himself, masturbated during massage sessions, placed massage therapist's hands on his genital area and more. As a result, the massage therapists working with Mr. Watson claim to have suffered panic attacks, anxiety, depression, blackouts, and at least one left the industry entirely.

So far, the NFL has not penalized Mr. Watson in any way. In fact, he just signed a guaranteed 5-year, \$230 million dollar contract with the Cleveland Browns – the most lucrative contract in NFL history – signed after the allegations of sexual abuse were publicized. We are saddened and outraged that high-profile cases like these involving massage therapists go unpunished and make it worse for those practitioners who are legitimately in this field to serve the public good.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC:

"HAPPY ENDINGS" ARE ILLEGAL DURING ANY PAID MASSAGE THERAPY SESSION

Mr. Watson's attorney stated that happy endings are not illegal, also stating that "doing something or saying something or being in a way that makes you uncomfortable is not a crime". In the United States, any type of sexual activity traded for money or goods is prohibited by law (unless there are special ordinances that allow it – for example – Nevada.)

SOLICITING PROSTITUTION IS A CRIME

While saying something uncomfortable is not a crime, soliciting prostitution by asking for "happy endings" or encouraging a Massage Therapists to touch genitalia in any way is, indeed, a crime.

MASSAGE THERAPISTS ARE BOUND BY STATE LAW

In most states, Massage Therapists are bound by state law to use appropriate draping that covers all clients, keeping genitalia covered at all times during massage sessions, and used in such a way that promotes the comfort and modesty of the client receiving the massage. Practitioners who break such

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law are subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including loss of their professional license. Requests by members of the public, as in the allegations concerning Mr. Watson, put massage therapists in dangerously uncomfortable situations, and could possibly even lead some massage therapists to be assaulted during massage therapy sessions.

MESSAGE THERAPISTS HAVE THE RIGHT OF REFUSAL

Most massage therapists, covered by licensing in the United States, have the right to refuse a client or stop a massage session at any time, for any reason. While most of the Massage Therapists in the United States work independently, for those who find themselves employed, this right of refusal is expected to be respected and supported by Massage Therapy Employers across the country.

MESSAGE THERAPY IS NOT SEX WORK

Historically, Massage Therapy has been the brunt of sexual innuendo and jokes, as portrayed in the media, on television, and in movies. In contrast to this widespread degradation of the legitimate practice of massage therapy, which is practiced by trained practitioners to bring pain relief, stress reduction, and improved quality of life to the general public, therapeutic massage in the United States does not include sexual release at any time for any reason.

HOW TO FIND STATE REGULATIONS REGARDING MASSAGE THERAPY

The public is welcome to look to our website here: [State By State A to M \(usolmt.com\)](http://usolmt.com) for State-by-State information on Draping Laws. We have also included links to each state's governing board of Massage Therapy. ***All members of the public and massage therapists are encouraged to visit the governing board's site to look up the most current rules, regulations, and scope of practice, as our site is only updated periodically.***

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A LICENSED MASSAGE THERAPIST

- Any text message, phone call, or in-person solicitation for sexual services may be reported to local law enforcement.
- Any licensed massage therapist or massage therapy establishment may present you with a sexual harassment policy to be signed prior to your session.
- Any legitimate practitioner of massage therapy should follow all applicable state laws regarding draping and client comfort, up to, and including, allowing clients to remain fully clothed in the interest of their comfort level.
- Any legitimate practitioner of massage therapy should respect your boundaries as a client in the massage room, including never exposing or touching your breasts and/or genital area.



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- Inappropriate jokes, comments, harassment, sexual assault, touching the massage therapist, sexual innuendo, or sexual activity in the treatment room may result in ending your massage immediately, requiring full payment, and a report filed with local law enforcement.

JOIN US IN DEFENSE OF THE MASSAGE PROFESSION

On behalf of all USOLMT members, and the Massage Therapy profession at large, we ask you to join us in sharing this statement or creating your own to share with the public, your current clients, and other massage therapists to defend and protect the sanctity of our profession. We encourage all massage therapists to contact their professional associations and governing boards of massage therapy, respectfully asking and encouraging them to join with us in standing up for the legitimate practice of Massage Therapy by educating the public as to what massage therapy is and is not, and what is and is not acceptable behavior towards a Massage Professional in the United States.