



College of  
Massage  
Therapists of  
Ontario

# Massage Matters

October 2025

## Discharging Clients who Engage in Abusive Behaviour

CMTO has made major changes to the [Standard of Practice: Client-Centred Care](#) and [Code of Ethics](#) to address the issue of discharging clients who engage in abusive behaviour.

As of October 1, 2025, these changes now empower RMTs/MTs to discharge a client who engages in verbal, physical or sexually abusive behaviour without having to provide advance notice. If the client still requires Massage Therapy care, RMTs/MTs can simply refer them to the [Public Register](#). The definition of Abusive Client Behaviour is any act or threat that compromises an RMT's/MT's safety, dignity, or professional boundaries, including:

**Physical:** Unwanted acts causing pain, injury, or fear of physical harm (e.g., hitting, pushing, threatening force)

**Sexual:** Unwanted sexual acts/behaviours, including sexualization of the therapeutic relationship (e.g., sexual remarks, non-consensual touch, sexualizing treatment)

**Verbal/Psychological:** Language or behaviour that demeans, intimidates, or harms the RMT's/MT's mental well-being (e.g., threats, insults, humiliation, racist, sexist, and discriminatory remarks)

CMTO takes all forms of abusive behaviour seriously, and it has no place in Massage Therapy.

### Resources

[Standard of Practice: Client Centred Care](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

[FAQ](#)

## What Does Abusive Client Behaviour Look Like?

How do you know if the client's behaviour is abusive? We break it down using two case scenarios. See the definition in CMTO's [Standard of Practice Glossary](#) as well.

### Case Study 1: Sexualizing the Relationship

#### Case Study Summary

During Massage Therapy treatment for chronic low-back pain, a client makes an explicit request for a sexual act from the RMT/MT. This shocks the RMT/MT, and they decide to immediately stop treatment, state the request was abusive and unacceptable, and leaves the room to ensure their safety. The client is discharged from care immediately. When the client asks for a referral to another practitioner for more low-back pain treatment, the RMT/MT directs them to CMTO's Public Register.

#### CMTO's Perspective

The client's behaviour in this case is classified as sexual abuse. It sexualizes the therapeutic relationship, violates the RMT's/MT's professional boundaries and right to a safe workplace. CMTO's Standards of Practice empower RMTs/MTs to immediately discharge clients for such actions without notice. If additional treatments are needed, a referral to CMTO's Public Register will meet the requirement for referral.

#### Key Takeaway

Massage Therapy is clinical healthcare. Explicitly sexualizing the relationship is abuse, not part of care, and justifies immediate discharge.

### Case Study 2: Poor Hygiene

#### Case Study Summary

A client arrives for an appointment with a strong, offensive body odour that makes the treatment difficult. The RMT/MT, while finding it unpleasant, understands they cannot discharge the client for this reason. The RMT/MT asks the client questions to better understand the client's background and needs; and assesses whether additional measures are needed in the practice setting to provide safe and effective care.

**CMTO's Perspective**

The client's hygiene is not abusive behaviour. Poor hygiene may be unintentional, and/or linked to health or social factors, but is not an abusive act against the RMT/MT. Abusive client behaviour threatens or violates an RMT's/MT's safety, dignity, or professional boundaries.

**Key Takeaway**

Address the issue with sensitivity and professionalism, using additional measures in the practice setting, if necessary. It requires empathetic communication with the client, and may require additional measures in the practice setting, but it is not a reason to discharge the client.

## Year-End Reminder: Have You Used Your Insurance Benefits Yet?

Did you know many employer insurance plans cover the fees for Massage Therapy? Now that we are in October, it's a great time to use up your employee benefits before the year ends. Not to mention, with the holiday season around the corner it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle and forget to take care of our health. As a clinical treatment, Massage Therapy can help. Why not gift yourself with a Massage Therapy treatment.

If you are redeeming a gift certificate or paying for your Massage Therapy treatment, to help ensure reimbursement and avoid delays or claim denials, make sure your receipts include the following details:

**For gift certificates:** Submit your Massage Therapy receipt and the gift certificate to your insurance provider. Your Massage Therapy receipt should show "gift certificate redeemed" with a \$0 transaction amount. The insurance company will decide at its discretion whether to cover the treatment.

**For insurance payment:** Make sure your receipts include the following details:

According to CMTO's [Standards of Practice: Fees and Billing](#), a Massage Therapy receipt must contain:

1. Date of the appointment
2. Name of the client
3. Name of the Registered Massage Therapist/Massage Therapist (RMT/MT)
4. The amount of the transaction
5. Signature and registration number of the RMT/MT
6. HST number (if applicable)

Receipts should only list services within Massage Therapy's Scope of Practice as "Massage Therapy treatment." While your RMT/MT can add details (e.g., "60-minute relaxation massage") upon request, the core information above must always be included.

For questions, email CMTO's Practice Specialist at [practicespecialist@cmta.com](mailto:practicespecialist@cmta.com).

Enjoy!

## Reminder: Standard of Practice for Collecting Personal Health Information (PHI) from Clients comes into effect on Nov 1

As a client, you have unique needs and preferences when seeking Massage Therapy. The College of Massage Therapists of Ontario's (CMTO's) new [Standard of Practice for Collecting Personal Health Information \(PHI\) from Clients](#), comes into effect on November 1, 2025. It sets forth requirements for Registered Massage Therapists/Massage Therapists (RMTs/MTs) to collect PHI using a client-centred approach. RMTs/MTs must only collect PHI for safe and effective treatment while balancing client rights with clinical needs. It specifies the PHI RMTs/MTs must ask, must never ask, and may ask clients under certain circumstances to provide safe and effective Massage Therapy care.

To help you learn more about the Standard, please review the following resources:

- [Client Resource](#)
- [Standard: Collecting Personal Health Information \(PHI\) from Clients](#)
- [New Standard of Practice for Collecting Personal Health Information \(PHI\) from Clients – Effective November 1, 2025](#)
- [How to Determine If It is Necessary to Collect PHI](#)
- [Video](#)
- [FAQs](#)



## Massage Therapy Awareness Week is Coming!

Massage Therapy Awareness Week takes place October 19-25, 2025. During the week, CMTO will be raising awareness around the benefits of Massage Therapy as a valued health profession and the importance of seeing RMTs/MTs to receive care.

**Help us spread the word!** Follow and share our content on social media:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [X](#)
- [Bluesky](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

## What's Happening at CMTO: September Board Highlights

CMTO's Board met on September 29, 2025. Highlights of the meeting are below:

During the meeting, the Board approved:

- Amendments to the *Code of Ethics* and the *Standard of Practice: Client-Centred Care* to allow RMTs/MTs to discharge clients who engage in physical, verbal and/or sexually abusive behaviour.
- A by-law amendment for CMTO committee reports to be separated from CMTO's Annual Report. Going forward, they will be published as stand-alone documents on CMTO's website.
- The renewal of CMTO's contract with the Canadian Massage Therapy Council for Accreditation (CMTCA).
- The 2026 Certification Examination content for both the OSCE and MCQ.

Registrar Maureen Boon reported on the province's expanded "As of Right" labour mobility rules. She also provided an update on her ongoing presentations to Massage Therapy education programs, engaging students before they begin their careers.

A special guest from the Canadian Massage Therapy Council for Accreditation (CMTCA) gave a presentation on accreditation for Massage Therapy programs.

You can find the Board meeting package [here](#).

## **Thank You For Your Feedback: New Strategic Plan Coming Soon!**

CMTO's planning for its new 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is fully underway. The strategic plan will identify priorities and guide our work for the next five years, helping ensure Ontarians continue to receive safe, ethical, and quality Massage Therapy care.

Over 3,600 stakeholders made up of RMTs/MTs, the public and CMTO staff provided feedback. Compared to CMTO's Strategic Plan survey in 2022, this represents a 78% increase in responses overall, with an increase from the public by almost 600%! Thank you for your participation! More details will be shared in the coming months. We are excited to have this new Strategic Plan guide our work in Massage Therapy regulation.