

Guidelines for finding and/or following legislation on
Music Therapist Licensure
By Sable Shaw

First, find out if there is pending legislation in your state.

1. To determine if there is legislation in your state to license Music Therapists, **go to the state legislature web site**. On the web site there is usually a way to access bills by bill # or by topic. If you don't know if there is a bill, type in music therapist licensure. This should take you to any relevant legislation. If you have the bill # but can't find information on the legislative web site, enter the bill # and state into goggle search and this may access the information.
2. Another avenue is **to call your state legislative representative/s (assemblyman and/or senator)** by phone and ask if there is any legislation to license or certify Music Therapists. They are willing to help constituents and it is a good idea to build relationships with your representatives. His or her staff may handle the request, and they are good to get to know.
3. Yet another avenue is to contact your local library or local or state law library for help in finding out if there is pending legislation.

Second, if you find legislation, look for the bill number.

1. **HB means House Bill, AB means Assembly Bill and SB means Senate Bill**
 2. Sometimes identical bills are introduced into both the House of Representatives (Assembly, Lower House) and the State Senate so it can be moving through both sides at the same time. **These are called companion legislation**. Usually if there are changes to either bill it can be handled in a conference committee before going for a vote on both sides.
- **Next you want to know who introduced the legislation.** (It may be your representative or someone from another district.) It would be good to call the legislative sponsor of the bill and express your specific concerns to him/her.
 - **You also want to know the person or group that initiated the legislation.** It is legislative protocol to talk with the person, group or organization to relay your concerns; if possible, do this before you testify on the bill.
 - **You want to find out if there is a deadline for public comment on the legislation.** Information sent in after the date won't be considered.

When reading the legislation **look at definitions and scope of practice**. If the scope of practice of a Music Therapist includes improvising, playing music at the bedsides and playing receptive music, this could mean it is illegal for you to do this without a Music Therapists degree and license. The legislation is consistent that all Music Therapists must have a Bachelors Degree in MT.

Another area to review is **any prohibitions of title and practice**. For example in the WA legislation (HB 2522) Section 2 “No person may practice Music Therapy or represent oneself as a music therapist by using **any title unless certified as provided for in this chapter.**” (Does this mean Therapeutic Musician?)

You want to find out what committee the bill has been assigned to and when it comes up for a hearing. You can find out when this committee meets and when the Music Therapy legislation will be heard by going to the committee site on the legislative web site.

If you plan to attend the hearing take written testimony with you. If you express your concerns about the legislation they will ask you to leave your written ‘notes’ and enter it into the record of the proceedings. Be sure to include your business card with your title and contact information (or include this information somewhere with the written testimony).

If other Therapeutic Musicians or Music Thanatologists have expressed their concerns to you, but they can’t attend the hearing, ask them to put their concerns in writing and you can submit their documents at the hearing. You could also gather support from nurses, doctors, facilities, grant funding sources and volunteers. Also ask them to call their state representative.

Unless the bill clearly exempts Therapeutic Musicians, you want to try to get a representative from Therapeutic Musicians and/or Music Thanatology on the committee to help write the regulations. If this doesn’t work, these are open meetings and you can attend the regulatory development process to hear and contribute to the discussion.

If you can’t attend a hearing, some legislatures provide a live feed of the hearing you can connect to on your computer. Some legislatures have video recordings of the hearings and you can view them a day or two later. (WA has a video of the Feb. hearing on the MT legislation)

Find out how many Therapeutic Musicians and Music Thanatologists you have in your state. You may be asked how big a group of people are concerned about this legislation. Legislators have to be concerned with the number of votes you might represent.

Not every state legislature functions exactly the same, but these suggestions should get you started.