



## **How to Write A Position Statement for the HOD**

This document is being prepared to assist members and Delegates as they consider and prepare Position Statements for submission to the House of Delegates of the American Massage Therapy Association. A carefully considered, well crafted Position Statement has a much better chance of being adopted by the House and will minimize confusion and debate on the floor of the House during its annual meeting.

### **What is a Position Statement of the House of Delegates?**

The House of Delegates is a representative body of the membership that approves AMTA position statements. A position statement is AMTA's position on professional or public policy issues that relate to the mission and goals of the Association. An individual member or group of members develops proposed Position Statements. However, they can only be submitted by an AMTA Professional Active member and only a delegate can submit a proposal for a Position Statement to the House of Delegates Operations Committee.

Once proposed position statements have gone through the review process, they are sent to delegates and made available to the membership via the AMTA Web site for feedback. Using this feedback to help form an opinion on the Position Statement, the delegate goes to the House of Delegates meeting where the Position Statement is debated and then voted on. If the Position Statement passes the House of Delegates, it becomes an official position of AMTA. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the maker of the Position Statement to submit a proposal that is in-keeping with AMTA policy and meets the criteria for a Position Statement.

### **Is it needed? This is the first thing to consider when planning to propose a Position Statement.**

Is the issue you are attempting to address covered in the current by-laws and policies of the organization? Before beginning the long process of drafting and offering a Position Statement it is wise to review these, and any other relevant AMTA documents. This will help you answer the second question.

### **Is it consistent with the Position Statement Criteria?**

Position Statement Criteria:

1. Must be related to AMTA's mission and goals.
2. Must address professional or public policy issues.
3. Must be in accordance with AMTA's statement on discrimination.
4. Must take a position, not state the need for a position.
5. Must be submitted in a standard format.
6. Must not be defamatory.
7. Must not make references to the position statement of an organization or the stated opinion of an individual.

8. Must not endorse a political candidate or party.
9. Must not address internal AMTA issues.
10. Must not endorse a specific product or company.

Position Statements must deal with issues related directly to massage therapy, or the policies and practices of AMTA.

Once a proposed Position Statement is received, it will go through a 12 week evaluation process. The proposed Position Statement will be evaluated by AMTA legal counsel, AMTA staff, and the Position Statement Workgroup of the HODOC. They will check for factual accuracy, legality and adherence to existing AMTA policy. Accuracy will be established via a bibliography of references.

The House of Delegates will not consider Position Statements that violate local, state, or federal statutes. Position Statements that would alter our tax-exempt status, or result in lengthy litigation would be unwise and probably be rejected.

The evaluation will also check against any impact on previously approved Position Statements. Each proposed Position Statement will be evaluated on form, approach and content. The Position Statement Workgroup will not make any suggestions to change the intent of the position statement.

### **Is a Position Statement in the House of Delegates the appropriate forum to discuss this issue?**

There are many avenues to provide feedback to the National Board of Directors. Any issue regarding the actions and functioning of the organization or issues related to the profession are permitted to be brought before the House of Delegates. Position Statements of the House of Delegates are not appropriate forums for personal vendettas or criticism of the organization, its board or individual officers or members.

### **Do you have a clear idea of what you hope to accomplish?**

Position Statements should have clear goals and address specific issues. Carefully consider what your desired outcome will be, and be able to express that outcome clearly. Position Statements are considered as presented and can not be amended on the floor of the House of Delegates. If you do not clearly present your intent and meaning, and why AMTA should hold this position then the debate will be difficult and frustrating and your Position Statement will flounder. You only get one shot each year, make it count.

### **Is your Position Statement well crafted?**

Sometimes English can be a frustrating language. However, words often have specific legal meanings, and there are rules of grammar. The document that you submit to the House of Delegates becomes a part of our organization's public record. Individuals outside of AMTA will have access to those documents; they should be well written and

properly formatted. Beyond the potential for embarrassment, the tragedy of a good idea being rejected because it is poorly presented is completely avoidable with a little groundwork up front.

Remember that Position Statements are considered and debated as presented. You will not have an opportunity to further explain what you really meant to say. Remember, the proposed Position Statement will be presented to the HOD by your delegate, not by the person who thought of it. Once presented, Position Statements cannot be amended. Use the spell checker and grammar check on your computer. Before you begin the process of submitting the Position Statement, have disinterested third parties (not just your friends) read and comment on your draft.

Position Statements that include good ideas, but are written with hostility or negativity are usually defeated on the basis of the way they are written, regardless of the intent of the Position Statement. Remember that we are a professional association and present your ideas in a clear way with supporting facts rather than emotions.

### **How do you write a Position Statement?**

A Position Statement should be written in a specific format, using the appropriate form. (The form is attached to this document.) Present a brief summary of the background and rationale for the Position Statement. Include any information that will explain the intent and meaning of the Position Statement. The Position Statement, itself, should be limited to one paragraph. Then include a list of verifiable references to support your proposal, including research, statistics, AMTA Board decisions, etc.

### **What are the Position Statement Deadlines?**

The idea for a position statement can come from anywhere or from anyone, but **may only** be proposed by an AMTA Professional member. They will be required to complete a Position Statement Proposal Form and submit it to one of their chapter's delegates, with a copy to their Chapter President.

The delegate will then be responsible for submitting the item to the House of Delegates Operations Committee. Position Statement Proposal Forms must be submitted to the delegate no later than **February 1<sup>ST</sup>**. Delegates must submit to the Position Statements Work Group Chair position statements for consideration by **February 15th** preceding the convention at which they are to be considered. If the proposal needs additional information or needs to be rewritten, the Work Group will return it to the delegate within **4 weeks**. This will give the Professional Member who submitted the proposal, and the delegate, an opportunity to make any changes they deem desirable and return them to the HODOC by **April 15th**.

### **Conclusion.**

We hope this document helps you in preparing and submitting Position Statements to the House of Delegates. These Position Statements are a vital form of member input into the association. We look forward to receiving your input and suggestions on how to improve this guide. If you have any suggestions, contact any member of the House of Delegates Operations Committee.