Registered Massage Therapists of Ontario

New Graduate Toolkit

Introduction

Entering the massage therapy profession can be an exciting time. You want to make sure you can build and maintain a successful practice and begin helping patients right away. It can also be a nerve-wracking time for many. There are a lot of different factors to consider and you want to make sure you are successful. If you've never run a business before it can be intimidating to handle all of the paperwork, marketing and financial decisions, while getting used to your new role as a health care professional.

The tips below are designed to help you start your massage therapy career as successfully as possible.

Finding the Ideal Practice Environment

Once you've graduated from your massage therapy program and passed your entry-to-practice exams with the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) you want to ensure you begin your career with a practice opportunity that would work best for you. Below are some ways that can help you choose your ideal first opportunity as an RMT.

Career Opportunities Listing Service

The RMTAO offers members access to our Career Opportunities Listing Service, which features dozens of diverse opportunities for RMTs across Ontario every month. As an RMTAO member, you can sign up to receive weekly updates of new career listings near you by editing your profile. Members can do this by logging into the RMTAO website, clicking on My Profile on the left side of their screen, and editing their preferences under the Job Notification section.

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New Graduate Toolkit

Finding the Ideal Practice Environment

Different practice environments

There are different types of environments that RMTs practice in, and the one that would be best depends on your goals and priorities.

Do you want to prioritize interprofessional collaboration and frequent interactions with other health care professionals that are part of your patient's circle of care? Although these opportunities can arise in any type of practice, there will be greater opportunities of this type in multidisciplinary clinics.

Are you hoping to focus your practice on treating athletes of all levels? Although athletes seek massage therapy care in all environments, you might in that case want to start a practice out of a gym to more closely target that population.

Do you prefer to work almost entirely independently and have total control over your practice space, materials and procedures? In that case, you may want to look into starting a home-based practice, or a multidisciplinary clinic where it's essentially different practitioners renting their own rooms and sharing only a waiting area.

When determining what type of practice environment you'd like to start your career in, ask yourself what your goals for your practice are during your first year, and over the next five years, and try to figure out what practice environment would work best for you. And remember, just because your start your career in one type of place, doesn't mean you can't make a change in the future.

Finding the Ideal Practice Environment

Different payment structures

There are many different ways you can be paid as an RMT some of which are outlined below.

Split percentage – meaning you get a percentage of the patient's fee for treatment, and the clinic owner gets a different percentage. This is one of the more common payment arrangements for RMTs. Most commonly the RMT receives 60% of the fee and the clinic owner receives 40% of the fee, but arrangements with greater percentages to the RMT are becoming more common.

If you're paid under a split percentage arrangement, the way HST is applied to your service will depend on various factors including whether you and the clinic owner are HST registered and who collects the payment from the patient. You can learn more about how HST applies to split percentage scenarios in the guideline available through the RMTAO called HST and the Split.

When looking at opportunities available, you might see places advertising a split percentage with a cap, meaning that after the RMT reaches a certain dollar amount in earnings; they will be able to keep 100% of their earnings. This is particularly beneficial once your practice becomes successful.

Other common payment agreements include an hourly, weekly or even monthly rate, or a flat rent that you have to pay every month. The benefit of paying rent is that you know the amount you will be paying to the clinic owner monthly. If you choose the split percentage option, and pay the clinic owner 30%-40% of your earnings, it might end up that you're paying them $2000-$3000 a month, especially if you don't have a cap. A flat rent is often closer to $1000 a month in many locations, so you may want to consider that as an option.

Finding the Ideal Practice Environment

Self-employed vs. Employee

Most RMTs are self-employed, and that is the working arrangement that many RMTs prefer. However, more and more places are offering opportunities for RMTs to be an employee of a clinic or other business, and RMTs are increasingly interested in becoming employees. Whether you want to be an employee or self-employed, you should understand both options to ensure you're classified correctly and making the right choice for yourself.

There are, in general, four factors to consider when determining whether someone is an employee or an independent contractor:

- Control - An employer generally has more control over an employee (especially in terms of determining working hours, vacations, where else the employee works, advertising), and a self-employed person has more control over their own business, including hours.
- Chance of profit/risk of loss - Self-employed people usually have some degree of financial risk since they should be in charge of all fundamental aspects of their own business, but they also have more chance for profit than employees.
- Integration - An employee's job will be an integral part of an employer's business, and the employer will determine how the employee's job should be done. A self-employed person is more independent from the business where they work and independently determine their tasks and professional expectations.
- Tools and Equipment – Although many clinics will supply some equipment, self-employed RMTs are more likely to be supplying most of their own equipment and be responsible for that equipment.

You can read more about the distinction between employees and self-employed independent contractors on the Canada Revenue Agency website.

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New Graduate Toolkit

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Contracts

Make sure you have a contract and that your contact covers important points to protect yourself and your business. Some factors you will want to consider when reviewing a contract include:

- The details of room and equipment sharing, including expectations and responsibilities.
- How and where files are stores, and who has access to them.
- Who sets work hours, how often might they be changed, and how holidays, sick days or potential locums are handled.
- Who sets the fee schedule, who the patient pays for services, and how often the RMT will be paid.
- How HST will be handled.
- Who is responsible for payment processing fees
- Who is responsible for marketing.
- Who is responsible for all relevant business expenses.
- Expectations for leaving a practice including who should notify patients and what will happen with files. More information about leaving a practice will be available in the RMTAO guide to leaving a practice.

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New Graduate Toolkit

Building a Successful Practice

Access helpful tools

The RMTAO offers members discounts on helpful tools you can use to build and maintain a successful practice. This includes:

- Discounts on ClinicSense, which can help you, offer online booking, virtual SOAP notes and digital reports in addition to all other aspects of online practice management.
- Discounts with Alliance who offer credit card processing options in your practice.
- If you practice out of your home, you will likely need different home insurance that allows for home businesses. Robertson Hall offers RMTAO members discounts on home insurance, and specialize in covering home-based practice.
- The RMTAO offers the lowest rate for Professional Liability Insurance in Canada, and if you're purchased your Professional Liability Insurance through the Trisura Portal, you have access to **free unlimited legal consultation.**

Expand your Knowledge

The RMTAO offers a variety of courses both online and in person (once possible), covering a wide range of topics. Topics covered include professional communications, massage therapy for specific conditions, tips for managing a successful business, and an overview of various professional and legal responsibilities.

These courses are designed for both entry-level practitioners and experienced RMTs. You can find a list of upcoming courses and events on the RMTAO website under the Education and Events tab.

Building a Successful Practice

Use Templates and Guidelines

There are a variety of records you will be required to keep in your practice related to the patient's health history, insurance information, consent and connections with other health professionals. Useful templates and guidelines available that you can apply directly to practice include:

- Sample health history form
- Consent to disclose personal health information
- MVA treatment tracking sheet
- Patient Pre-Visit Intake Form
- Consent to participate
- Interprofessional Collaboration Toolkit, including templates to help you communicate with other health professionals.
- HST Guideline

If you're looking for any particular resource to help in your practice, please contact the RMTAO directly.

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New Graduate Toolkit

Marketing Yourself

RMTFind.com

All RMTAO members have access on one free listing on RMTFind.com, which is a website where members of the public search for an RMT in their area. Members of the public can search for an RMT near them by city or postal code.

Thousands of people search RMTFind.com every week! You can include information about your practice on your RMTFind listing, including hours, appointment booking options, whether you offer direct billing, and whether you speak any additional language. If you would like an additional listing on RMTFind, you can purchase additional listings for $12 per listing, per year.

Actively promoting yourself

There is a lot you can do to promote your professional practice, attract new patients and retain current patients and at the same time promote the massage therapy profession as a whole.

The RMTAO offers both a Marketing Toolkit and Social Media Toolkit to give you advice to promoting your practice on various platforms. These toolkits provide information on the platforms available to promote your practice, advice on how to use these platforms successfully, and overview of your requirements and obligations when it comes to promoting your practice, and sample posts you can use in your self-promotion efforts.

It is also important to keep your personal and professional social media presence separate both to remain professional and for your personal safety. There are a variety of Facebook groups for RMTs both region-specific and general, and although these are great resources to connect with your peers, it is important to verify everything you hear on the CMTO, with the RMTAO or through other sources. It is also important to remain professional in any of these groups you choose to participate in.

Contact the RMTAO at info@rmtao.com for more information or for help accessing these resources.

Marketing Yourself

Promoting the Profession

The RMTAO has a variety of resources that promote the massage therapy profession which you can share on your networks.

This includes blog posts about the benefits of massage therapy for different conditions and populations. Some recent topics of blog posts include massage therapy for foot and ankle pain, massage therapy for surgical recovery, and the importance of understanding pain for RMTs.

The RMTAO has also created a public presentation about the benefits of massage therapy for diverse conditions and populations. You can use this presentation to share information with other health professionals and members of the public.

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New Graduate Toolkit

Meeting Your Requirements and Responsibilities

Interacting with the CMTO

When the CMTO makes any changes to policies, standards or recommendations, the RMTAO is always part of the conversation, advocating in our members best interests to ensure the changes are easy to understand and implement.

We always share news from the CMTO making it as simple and easy to understand as possible. If you have any questions about any CMTO requirements, we would be happy to help you!

We also have blog posts that will help you navigate less common situations with the CMTO. This includes What RMTs need to know about Discipline Hearings with the CMTO, and an overview of Complaint Reviews at the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board.

Free Unlimited Legal Consultation

If you purchased your Professional Liability Insurance through the Trisura Portal, you have access to free unlimited legal consultations.

Information on how to access the program will be on the second page of your insurance coverage certificate. You will need to have your policy number handy when you contact the legal hotline.

You will be able to speak with a lawyer with significant experience in health law to discuss any legal issue that has come up in your practice. Some examples of legal issues people have discussed on the hotline include tax questions, contract issues and difficulties with clinic owners.

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New Graduate Toolkit

Meeting Your Requirements and Responsibilities

Setting Fees

RMTs choose to set their own fees, but the RMTAO provides guidance to help you to make your fee setting decisions.

In addition to making suggestions for the fees you should charge for massage therapy treatment and various other services, our fee guideline offers advice about a variety of other fee-related issues.

Issues covered in our fee guideline include regulations related to receipts, gift certificates, suggestions on how to handle tipping, how canceled or missed appointments are handled and what RMTs can expect from their first appointment.

Understanding HST

Our HST Guideline helps you understand how to implement HST in your practice including the importance of “not eating the tax” , how and when to become HST registered, and how HST will financially impact all aspects of your practice. It also provides information on why HST is applies to a health care service and how it can eventually be removed.

It can be particularly difficult to understand how HST applies to split percentage arrangements, which is a common payment arrangement with RMTs. This depends on how collects the fee, and whether the RMT or the clinic owner are HST registered. The application of HST in this scenario is outlined in our guideline HST and the Split.

Registered Massage Therapists of Ontario

New Graduate Toolkit

Connecting with Your Peers and with Your Profession

Community-Based Networks

Whether you begin to work as an RMT as part of your own independent practice it can be easy to begin to feel isolated from other RMTs. Our Community-Based Networks provide the opportunity to meet with fellow RMTs in your region to discuss issues in your practice, share marketing, accounting and business tips and tricks, talk about big picture issues in the massage therapy profession and learn more about different massage therapy styles and techniques.

There are a variety of Community Based Networks across Ontario, and you can view a full list on the RMTAO website . If you don't see a Community-Based Network near you, you can contact the RMTAO at info@rmtao.com.

Some topics Community-Based Networks have covered in the past include new COVID-19 restrictions, new CMTO requirements, tips for tax season, massage therapy as part of cancer care, and marketing tips to build your practice. If you have topics to suggest or would like to learn about upcoming meetings near you, contact your local coordinator.

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New Graduate Toolkit

Connecting with Your Peers and with Your Profession

Keep Up To Date with Advocacy

The RMTAO advocates on behalf of the massage therapy profession so that the profession is recognized and respected as an evidence-based health care option. We advocate to the government, to the insurance industry, to other health professionals and to the public, working frequently with other health care organizations on issues of mutual concern.

The RMTAO posts advocacy updates on our blog, as well as in the Friday File. By keeping up-to-date with advocacy updates, you are ensuring you are aware of the important issues in your profession. RMTAO advocacy has practical impacts on your practice including ensuring that extended health benefits plans will continue covering massage therapy fairly, creating opportunities for RMTs in government health care programs, ensuring there is a growing research base for RMTs, and ensure the public is aware of the ways that massage therapy can help them.

Interprofessional Collaboration

RMTs are an important part of a patient's circle of care, and by communicating regularly with other health professionals who are also treating your patient, you can help improve patient outcomes. It can be intimidating to approach other health professionals when you first start out and you might not know where to start.

Our Interprofessional Collaboration Toolkit provides tips to collaborate and communicate effectively with other health professionals. This toolkit also includes practical tools and templates to help you structure your communication with other health professionals. This includes templates you can use for letters of introduction, progress and referral you can send to other health professionals.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the RMTAO at:
Phone: 416-979-2010 Toll free: 1-888-668-2022 Email: info@rmtao.com