

# Institute of Natural Health and Education

## Continuing Education Division



## Professional Ethics and Sexual Harassment for Massage Therapists

# Welcome to the Professional Ethics Section of this CE Course

## What is Professional Ethics?

Professional ethics is a system of moral principles of conduct or values that govern an individual guided by good intent. Most professions adhere to a code of ethics in order to establish guidelines for behavior and decision-making. As massage therapists, we are frequently faced with legal and ethical issues and our code of ethics determines how we manage in the scope of our practice. Most medical professional associations have an established code of ethics. The following examples illustrate some common codes followed by many medical professional associations.

- Respecting the patient's right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Treating patient in a dignified and respectful manner.
- Observing the patient's right to refuse treatment.
- Providing informed consent for treatment.
- Practicing within one's limitations and scope of practice.
- Making appropriate referrals to other health care professionals when necessary.
- Refraining from mind-altering substances prior to or during patient treatment sessions.
- Refraining from engaging in sexual conduct or sexualizing behavior with a patient even if the patient attempts to initialize such behavior.
- Maintaining a safe and sanitary establishment.
- Refusing gifts from patients, physicians, or others, which are intended to influence a decision or referral solely for personal gain.
- Improving technical skills through continuing education.
- Adhere to fair billing practices and avoid overcharging or billing for services not rendered.

# CODE OF ETHICS

The Code of Ethics of the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) requires certificants to uphold professional standards that allow for the proper discharge of their responsibilities to those served, that protect the integrity of the profession, and that safeguard the interest of individual clients. Those practitioners who have been awarded national certification by the NCBTMB will:

- Have a sincere commitment to provide the highest quality of care to those that seek their professional services.
- Represent their qualifications honestly, including their educational achievements and professional affiliations, and will provide only those services that they are qualified to perform.
- Refrain, under all circumstances, for initiating or engaging in any sexual conduct, sexual activities, or sexualizing behavior involving a client, even if the client attempts to sexualize the relationship.
- Avoid any interest, activity, or influence, which might be in conflict with the practitioner's obligation to act in the best interests of the client or the profession.
- Respect the client's boundaries with regard to privacy, disclosure, exposure, emotional expression, beliefs, and the client's reasonable expectations of professional behavior. Practitioners will respect the client's autonomy
- Refuse any gifts or benefits that are intended to influence a referral, decision, or treatment that are purely for personal gain and not for the good of the client.
- Follow all policies, procedures, guidelines, regulations, codes and requirements promulgated by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork.

In order to uphold the highest standard of professional conduct we must explore the many regulations governing the massage profession. Only then can we build a foundation for ensuring our patients get the best quality medical treatment and do not suffer any harm under our care.

Although the laws and regulations vary from association to association, state-to-state, and institution-to-institution, we must always strive to make our patient's safety and welfare our greatest priority. We must realize our words and actions have a tremendous impact on our professional relationships and our patient's treatment success. Let this course serve as a guide in understanding the latest professional ethics rules, regulations, and policies.

## BEFORE TREATING THE PATIENT

Prior to being evaluated, all patients should be required to fill out information forms. The following is a list of information that should be included on these forms:

- 1) Patient name, address, work and home phone numbers.
- 2) Person to contact in case of emergency.
- 3) Insurance information, if applicable.
- 4) Allergies including food and/or chemical allergies. (May be important in selecting massage oils, creams, or herbal preparations.)
- 5) Past medical history. (May be important in identifying areas of the body to avoid.)
- 6) Reason for visit.
- 7) Informed consent for treatment with information on scope of practice with patient signature and date.
- 8) Consent to release medical information if required by law or court order.

The above information should be kept on each patient in a formal chart along with daily progress notes. Information in these charts should never be released to anyone but the patient unless legal authorization is obtained. Patients should be required to sign a release form if requesting their medical records. The purpose of maintaining the chart is to satisfy state laws, meet insurance filing requirements, and to defend the practitioner in the face of possible litigation.

The importance of good communication between practitioner and patient cannot be underestimated. It is usually within minutes of initial contact that impressions are made. These impressions most likely affect the outcome of treatment. It is important to always maintain a professional appearance when treating patients. Business attire with an appropriately labeled coat identifying name and professional licensure is preferred.

Practitioners should greet patients in a warm and friendly manner and maintain eye contact. The patient should then be asked to enter the treatment room and be seated. The practitioner should remain standing to establish authority. While the patient is still dressed, a brief history of the patient's complaints should be obtained. Following is a sampling of questions to ask:

- 1) Where is the location of your pain and the intensity?
- 2) How long have you been having these symptoms?
- 3) Was the onset of your pain spontaneous or related to a traumatic event?
- 4) Does the pain radiate to other parts of your body?
- 5) Is your pain associated with any weakness, stiffness, numbness, tingling, or other peculiar sensations? If so, please describe.
- 6) Are there any limitations as to what you can do as a result of your pain?
- 7) Have you been treated previously for this condition and, if so, how were you treated and what was the response.

The practitioner should document the response to the above questions in the patient's chart. It may also be helpful to use a written visual diagram.

A common mistake when taking the patient's history is interrupting and not letting the patient finish answering the question it may be prudent to wait a moment after the patient answers the question to respond. This will help to establish a good rapport with the patient and help the practitioner to obtain the maximum amount of information before proceeding to treatment.

When interviewing the patient, be sure to state your question clearly and precisely. Allow the patient to answer at his or her own pace. Do not attempt to finish the answer for the patient even if the patient seems to slow in answering. Listen carefully to the patient's response and wait a few seconds after you think the patient is finished before responding. Do not interrupt the patient unless necessary. Focus your attention on the patient's response. Do not attempt to do other things in the room while the patient is talking.

When responding address any concerns the patient may have had respectfully and cordially. Remember to document responses in the patient's chart. Finally, treat the patients the way they want to be treated, not the way you want to be treated.

After providing the patient with a gown, towel, or sheet, informing the patient that you will return momentarily to begin the treatment session and leave the room closing the door behind you or pulling the drapes. Before re-entering the room, knock on the door and/or ask the patient permission to re-enter.

Before the treatment session begins, the practitioner should explain the intent of the session and the hoped for outcome. It is also important to explain what kind of massage treatment will be performing and why. Make an attempt to choose words carefully to avoid misunderstanding. Communicating your ethical intent will help put the patient's mind at ease. Keep in mind that you can also communicate through body language, facial expression, and touch.

Practice good oral and body hygiene and refrain from using mind-altering drugs and alcohol before or during any massage therapy session.

Some patients may be victims of sexual or domestic abuse. During your career, you will undoubtedly treat many of these victims, most of the time unknowingly. The majority of such patients will respond appropriately to massage therapy however a few may react by withdrawing or acting fearful. Do not ask a patient directly if he or she has ever been a victim of sexual or domestic abuse. Such a personal and sensitive line of questioning would clearly cross patient/therapist boundaries. Instead, attempt to relax the patient by explaining your goals of treatment and ethical intent. This should allay fears and gain the patient's trust.

Finally, following the massage therapy session, a specific treatment plan with clearly defined goals should be discussed with the patient, written down in the patient's chart, and agreed to. Examples of what to discuss are:

- 1) Recommended frequency of sessions.
- 2) Recommended length of sessions.
- 3) Areas of the body that require specific attention and why.
- 4) Recommended exercises or activities to perform between sessions to hasten results.
- 5) Activities to avoid between sessions.
- 6) When the patient should notice results.

Subsequent treatment sessions should end similarly but discussion should be adjusted following completion of each session, as goals and treatment may change.

# COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR THE MASSAGE THERAPIST

Effective communication skills are vital to establishing rapport and putting the patient at ease. These skills can also help establish authority. The patient must be able to trust the practitioner if optimal results are to be achieved. There are two parts to communication.

1. Listening
2. Responding

Patients frequently complain that practitioners fail to listen to their complaints thoroughly and sympathetically. Negative and/or positive opinions regarding the therapist are usually formed in the first few minutes of patient/therapist contact. Below are some commonsense guidelines to good communication skills.

- 1) Maintain eye contact. Poor eye contact conveys dishonesty and nervousness. Proper eye contact will help you establish trust and rapport with the patient.
- 2) Maintain a professional appearance. Business attire and lab coat identifying your name and licensure is recommended. Good oral and body hygiene cannot be overemphasized. Deodorant should always be worn and reapplied when necessary throughout the day. Cologne and perfume should not be worn during treatment sessions. Some patients may either be allergic or object to the fragrance. Set the example by assuming good posture.
- 3) Keep the conversation light when first greeting the patient. Be amiable and respectful. Remember. To smile and use light humor to put the patient at ease. Avoid any sexual or offensive humor.
- 4) Observe the demeanor behavior of the patient. Some patients may be friendly and open, while others may act guarded and distant. Recognizing the difference can help you establish effective communication skills for each individual patient. What may work for one patient may not work for another.
- 5) Respect the patient's cultural and religious customs. The United States today is more culturally diverse than ever. You can expect to treat patients who have originated from many different foreign lands. Although some customs and beliefs may seem strange to you, they are a vital part of many people's lives from foreign countries.

## DRAPING OF THE PATIENT

It is important to maintain professional boundaries at all times. Many misunderstandings have occurred when the patient's dignity and respect have been compromised unintentionally. Proper draping technique can help avoid such dilemmas. The following guidelines should be followed with regard to patient draping.

### **GUIDELINE #1: Never let a patient dress or undress in front of you.**

This clearly oversteps the boundaries of a professional relationship. It is possible a patient may incorrectly perceive you as obtaining sexual gratification by observing them putting on or removing their clothes. After providing the patient with a gown, towel, or sheet, inform the patient that you will return momentarily to begin the treatment session and leave the room closing the door behind you or pulling the drapes. Before re-entering the room, knock on the door and /or ask the patient permission to re-enter. On the other hand, some patients may find sexual gratification by dressing or undressing in front of you. This is inappropriate behavior on behalf of the patient, and you must avoid this situation by leaving the room immediately.

### **GUIDELINE #2: Provide a sufficient supply of clean draping materials.**

Towels, gowns, or sheets are adequate for this purpose. Never use the same drape twice without proper laundering. Keep a sufficient supply on hand so as not to run out before the end of the workday.

### **GUIDELINE #3: Explain the draping procedure to the patient.**

It is important for the patient to understand they will not be "exposed" during the treatment session. Explain how the drape will be moved as the patient changes position to prevent accidental exposure. This simple approach will help put the patient at ease and assist in relaxing the patient's muscles enabling you to perform your job more effectively. You will also be respecting the patient's right to dignity and respect. Remember do not expose more of the patient than necessary. Expose only the region you are currently working on. For example, if you are working on the left leg, expose only the left leg region and drape the rest of the patient's body excluding the head. It is the responsibility of the massage therapist to explain sex-appropriate draping procedures to the patient.

## **GUIDELINE #4: Use sex-appropriate draping technique.**

Different draping procedures are utilized according to the patient's sex. In the case of a male patient, a drape must always be used over the genitalia and buttocks. In the case of a female patient, a drape must be used over the genitalia, buttocks, and breasts. Failure to follow sex-appropriate draping techniques may result in disciplinary action. The following illustrations depict what regions to always drape according to sex.

## **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Trust is necessary to maintain any professional relationship. The therapist/ patient relationship must always be on a professional level. Illinois law prohibits any sexual activity between the therapist and patient. Sexual activity is not limited to intercourse and includes masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, and anal intercourse. Any physical contact, whether direct or indirect, by a person or between persons that is intended to erotically stimulate either or both persons is considered "sexual activity." This type of conduct is highly unethical and severely compromises the therapist/patient relationship. Massage therapists who use their position to engage in sexual activity with patients are widely condemned. Any sexual misconduct is a serious violation and grounds for disciplinary action.

Many physicians who must examine patient's genitalia now insist on having a witness in the room during such an examination to protect against unfounded charges of sexual misconduct.

The following guidelines should be observed in order to safeguard against allegations of sexual misconduct.

- ✓ **Do not joke about sexual matters in front of the patient or tell sexual jokes**
- ✓ **Do not have sexual relations with any patient in or outside of the treatment setting**
- ✓ **Do not allow the patient to dress or undress in front of you**
- ✓ **Expose only the patient's body part that you are currently working on**
- ✓ **Avoid massaging genitalia and buttocks on men and breasts, genitalia, and buttocks on women**
- ✓ **Avoid touching body parts that are not absolutely necessary in order to obtain a therapeutic outcome**
- ✓ **Inform the patient before beginning treatment which regions you will be working on and ask permission before proceeding**

- ✓ **Handle sexual advances by patients in a professional manner by informing the patient that you follow a strict code of ethics prohibiting you from therapist/patient relations of a sexual nature**

## ADVERTISING ISSUES

Most businesses and professions engage in advertising to obtain new business and the massage therapy profession is no exception.

All licensed massage therapists should clearly display the number of their license and /or number of their establishment license on the following media when advertising their services.

- ❖ **Newspaper**
- ❖ **Telephone directory**
- ❖ **Airwave transmission such as radio or television**
- ❖ **Business cards or brochures**
- ❖ **Internet or computer**
- ❖ **Fliers, handbills, signs or other advertising medium**

Each massage therapist or massage establishment licensed under the provisions of this act shall include the number under the provisions of this act shall include the number of the license in any advertisement of massage services appearing in any newspaper, airwave transmission, telephone directory, or other advertising medium. Pending licensure of a new massage establishment pursuant to the provisions of s. 480.043(6), the license number to a licensed massage therapist who is an owner or principal officer of the establishment may be used in lieu of the license number for the establishment.

In addition to the above advertising media, licensed massage therapists are required to conspicuously display their licenses in view of patients at each location where he or she practices. This includes massage establishment licenses.

Regulations established by the Federal Trade Commission prohibit false or misleading advertising claims. Violators will be subject to fines and possibly be forced to run a corrective advertisement at their own expense.

While many unconventional techniques may be legal, they may not be ethical. Any practice not widely accepted

by the medical community may be called unconventional though not necessarily illegal. Some advertising techniques that border on unethical may include:

- **Fear tactics meant to scare the consumer into purchasing a product or utilizing a service**
- **Guilt tactics meant to make the consumer feel as if they are a bad person if they do not purchase a product or utilize a service**

It is important to utilize good judgment when advertising massage therapy services. Avoid the following in your advertising.

- **Sexual innuendo**
- **Misleading claims**
- **Claims promising cure of disease, pain, or ailment**

## **GENERAL MISCONDUCT AND NEGLIGENCE**

There are many acts of conduct that may result in disciplinary action by the Illinois Board of Massage Therapy or the issuance of a citation. Among them are:

- 1) Falsely obtaining a massage therapy license by bribery or fraudulent misrepresentation.
- 2) Failing to maintain a sanitary and clean massage establishment environment.
- 3) Practicing massage therapy with a suspected or revoked license.
- 4) Refusing to allow inspection of massage establishment premises during normal business hours.
- 5) Engaging in false, deceptive, or misleading, advertising.
- 6) Practicing massage beyond the scope permitted by law.
- 7) Practicing massage under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or mind-altering substances.
- 8) Engaging in sexual misconduct with patients.
- 9) Being convicted of a crime that directly relates to the practice of massage therapy or the ability to practice massage.
- 10) Having been found liable after filing a false complaint to the board regarding another licensee.
- 11) Influencing the patient for the purpose of financial gain.
- 12) Engaging in reflexology without a current massage therapy license.
- 13) Failure to maintain proper insurance for a massage establishment.

- 14) Failure to display a massage therapy or establishment license or certificate.
- 15) Failure to include massage therapy or establishment license numbers on advertising material.
- 16) Practicing massage therapy at a trade show, sporting event, or convention without first obtaining formal written consent by the property manager or owner of the site.
- 17) Failure to explain sex-appropriate draping techniques.
- 18) Failure to follow sex-appropriate draping techniques.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE AND HEALTH HABITS

To inspire confidence and trust in your clients, you should project a well-groomed, professional appearance at all times. In a personal service business, personal health and good grooming are assets that clients admire and are essential for your protection and that of the client.

Your personal health and grooming habits should include the following:

- 1) Bate or shower daily and use a deodorant, as necessary.
- 2) Keep your teeth and gums healthy. Visit your dentist regularly.
- 3) Use mouthwash and avoid foods that contribute to offensive breath odor.
- 4) Keep your hair fresh and clean and wear an appropriate hairstyle. Hair should be worn in a style that you do not have to touch or fuss with during a massage session. In addition, your hair must not touch the client during the session.
- 5) Avoid strong fragrances such as perfumes, colognes, and lotions.
- 6) Keep your hands free of blemishes and calluses. Use lotion to keep them soft and smooth.
- 7) Keep your nails clean and filed so they do not extend to the tips of the fingers. Sharp nails should never come in contact with the client's skin. Never wear garnish nail polish.
- 8) If you are a woman, wear appropriate makeup in subdued, flattering colors. Be sure makeup is applied neatly.
- 9) If you are a man, keep beard or mustache neat and well groomed. If you prefer the clean-shaven look, be sure to shave as often as necessary.
- 10) Avoid gum chewing or smoking in the presence of clients.
- 11) Keep your face clean and free of blemishes.
- 12) Practice all rules of sanitation for the client's and for your own protection.
- 13) Have a complete physical exam by a physician before beginning work as a massage practitioner. Continue to have checkups, follow your physician's advice, and do all that is possible to maintain optimum health.
- 14) If you perspire heavily, take precautions so that your perspiration does not drop on the client.
- 15) Take time for relaxation and physical fitness. Get massages regularly. A regimen of daily exercise is recommended. This may be accomplished by participation in active sports of your choice.
- 16) Eat a well-balanced, nutritious diet. Maintain your normal weight for your height and bone structure. You should not

be extremely overweight or underweight. If you have a weight problem, follow your physician's advice on how to attain your most healthful weight.

- 17) Be aware of good posture when walking, standing, sitting, and working. Poor posture can strain your muscles.
- 18) Wear appropriate clothing for your profession. Clothing should be loose enough to allow for optimal movement. It should be free of accessories that might catch on the massage table. Consider clothing that allows your body heat to escape. Clothing items made of natural fibers such as cotton are good.

# Sexual Harassment

## Learning Objectives

- Definition of sexual harassment
- Learning the different types of sexual harassment
- Identifying sexual harassment
- Steps to filing a complaint



# Definition

- Unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment.



# Breaking down the definition : “Conduct”

- Conduct is NOT sexual harassment if it is welcome. For this reason, it is important to communicate (either verbally or in writing) to the harasser that the conduct makes you uncomfortable and you want it to stop.



# “Sexual Nature of Harassment”

- **Verbal and Written Sexual Nature:** Comments about clothing, personal behavior, or a person’s body; sexual or sex-based jokes; requesting sexual favors or repeatedly asking a person out; sexual innuendoes; telling rumors about a person’s personal or sexual life; threatening a person, sending emails or text messages of a sexual nature
- **Physical Sexual Nature:** Assault; impeding or blocking movement; inappropriate touching of a person or a person’s clothing; kissing, hugging, patting, stroking



# “Sexual Nature of Harassment”



- **Nonverbal:** Looking up and down a person’s body; derogatory gestures or facial expressions of a sexual nature; following a person
- **Visual:** Posters, drawings, pictures, screensavers, emails or text of a sexual nature

# Non-Sexual Nature Harassment

- \*\* Non-sexual conduct may also be sexual harassment if you are harassed because you are female, rather than male, or because you are male, rather than female.
- For example, it may be sexual harassment if you are a woman working as a carpenter on an all-male job, and you are the only one whose tools are frequently hidden by your male co-workers.



# “Severe or Pervasive”

- The conduct of the harasser must be either severe or pervasive to be classified as sexual harassment.
- Although a single unwanted request for a date or one sexually suggestive comment might offend you and/or be inappropriate, it may not be sexual harassment. However, a number of relatively minor separate incidents may add up to sexual harassment if the incidents affect your work environment.

# “Severe or Pervasive Situations”



# Questions to ask yourself:



- How many times did the incidents occur?
- How long has the harassment been going on?
- How many others have been sexually harassed?
- Who were witnesses to the harassment?

# “Affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment”

- It may be sexual harassment if the conduct unreasonably interferes with your work performance or creates an “intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.”
- For example, it may be sexual harassment if repeated sexual comments make you so uncomfortable at work that your performance suffers, or you decline professional opportunities because it will put you in contact with the harasser.

# Types of Sexual Harassment

- Quid Pro Quo  
(“This for that”)

A person in a position of authority, typically a supervisor, demands sexual favors as a condition to getting or keeping a job benefit.



# Hostile Work Environment

- Verbal, physical or visual forms of harassment, that are sexual in nature, "sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive" and unwelcome fall under the category of Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment.
- A single, severe incident, such as a sexual assault, could create a hostile environment. More commonly, a "hostile environment" is created by a series of incidents.

# Hostile Work Environment Situations



# Examples of Sexual Harassment

- Touching and any other bodily contact such as scratching or patting a coworker's back, grabbing an employee around the waist, or interfering with an employee's ability to move.



# Examples of Sexual Harassment

- Unwanted jokes, gestures, offensive words on clothing, and unwelcome comments and witty responses.
- Repeated requests for dates that are turned down or unwanted flirting.



# Examples of Sexual Harassment

- Transmitting or posting emails, texts, or pictures of a sexual or other harassment-related nature.
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or posters.
- Playing sexually suggestive music.



# Why Victims Don't Report Sexual Harassment:

- They feel embarrassed
- They blame themselves
- They don't trust "the system"
- They don't want to "rock the boat"
- They are afraid of the harasser or others
- They don't want to get the harasser into trouble
- They don't know how to report the harassment

# HOW DOES IT FEEL? SEXUAL HARASSMENT VERSUS FLIRTING AND FUN TEASING

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

- HURTS
- CAUSES ANGER
- SHAME
- GUILT
- FRUSTRATION
- DISEMPOWERS
- LOWERS SELF ESTEEM
- **ENJOYED BY THE HARASSER, NOT THE VICTIM**

## FLIRTING/FUN TEASING

- FEELS GOOD
- FLATTERING
- EMPOWERING
- MAKES ME FEEL:
  - HAPPY
  - ATTRACTIVE
  - ACCEPTED
- ENHANCES SELF ESTEEM
- **IS ENJOYED BY BOTH PERSONS**

# EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- EMOTIONAL

- ANXIETY
- FEAR
- ANGER
- CONFUSION
- DEPRESSION
- EMBARRASSMENT
- GUILT
- SHAME
- LOWER SELF ESTEEM

- PHYSICAL

- ILLNESS
- WEIGHT GAIN/LOSS
- DRUG/ALCOHOL USE
- SLEEPLESSNESS
- POOR HYGIENE OR SELF CARE

# EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- SOCIAL
  - ISOLATION
  - LOSS OF FRIENDS
  - AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
  - DAMAGED REPUTATION
  - ANXIOUS IN OTHER SOCIAL SETTINGS
- EDUCATIONAL/FUTURE
  - POOR GRADES
  - ABSENTEEISM
  - TARDINESS
  - UNFILLED GOALS
  - LOSS OF EARNING POWER
  - POSSIBLE FIRING
  - BAD REPUTATION AS A WHISTLE BLOWER OR NOT A TEAM PLAYER

# Steps to Stop the harassment or File a Complaint

- Let the harasser know that his or her conduct is unwanted and unwelcome and it needs to stop!





# Steps to Stop the harassment or File a Complaint

- Try to use **Buddy System** or stay in group setting to decrease the opportunities of the harasser
- **Document the occurrences** – Keep all text messages, face book entries, tweets, letters or any other interaction to support your claim
- **Confide in a trusted coworker or friend** – Let people you trust know your situation for support and assistance



# Steps to Stop the harassment or File a Complaint

- **Tell someone you trust** in higher authority – At school your teacher, principal or superintendent; in bigger companies there is a Human Resource Department which is responsible for employee safety and or assistance



# Steps to Stop the harassment or File a Complaint

- Go to a supervisor and explain the circumstances. Be sure to take with you **documented dates, times, and specific occurrences if you have them.** Also, report the incident to Human Resources. If the appropriate supervisor is unavailable, or is the offender, report the incident directly to Human Resources



# Steps to Stop the harassment or File a Complaint

- **File a police report or restraining order –** Remember this only provide you the ability to impose consequences later in the court of law; **IT DOES NOT ALWAYS PROTECT OR STOP ACTIONS;** you still need to take precautions for your safety

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