Examining Non-Compliance in Licensing Requirements among Asian-Pacific Islander Massage Practitioners
Objectives

• To identify any barriers that hinder licensing of Asian-Pacific Islander community members who practice massage.

• To recommend ways to make massage education and licensing processes more culturally responsive to API massage practitioners’ needs.
Timeline and Research Process

September ~ December 2014
- A multicultural project team
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) for conducting interviews.

November 2014 ~ February 2015
- 23 interviews
- 22 interviews in three languages other than English
- Notes were transcribed and key themes were identified.

February ~ March 2015
- Data analysis
- Recommendations were developed.
Categories for Key Findings

I. General Background of the API Massage Practitioners
II. Where and How API Massage Practitioners Work
III. The API Massage Practitioners’ Perspectives on Licensing
IV. Key Reasons for Practicing Massage without A License

NOTE: The term “massage practitioner” is used broadly to refer to those who practice massage, but who may or may not be licensed.
I. General Background of the API Massage Practitioners

• First generation immigrants, hoping to make a better living, to unite with family
• Educational level was not high
• Had some massage training before
• Were not eligible to work when first came because of immigration status.
II. Where and How API Massage Practitioners Work

- **Massage Facilities**
  - Licensed or unlicensed

- **Non-massage Service Facilities**
  - Nail salon, foot spa, and Reflexology
  - License not required

- **Work Independently**
  - At their own home or the client’s
  - Unlicensed

- **Supplemental or Part-time**
  - Some practice massage part-time while pursuing a permanent job
  - Suplemental job on day offs, call in
III. API Massage Practitioners’ Perspectives on Licensing

- **Lack of awareness:**
  didn’t know the requirements

- **Info inaccuracy:**
  info obtained through friends and colleagues

- **Licensing process is hard:**
  Language barrier, difficult knowledge, costly, time-consuming

- **Is it worth it?**
IV. Key Reasons for Unlicensed Practicing

- Difficulty understanding the licensing process
- Lacked sufficient English proficiency to pass the examination
- Lacked financial resources for licensing
- Did not want to invest the time to prepare for the examination
- Lacked sufficient education to master the examination content
IV. Key Reasons for Unlicensed Practicing (cont.)

- Concerned about their immigration status
- Did not consider massage therapy to be a professional occupation that warrants licensing
- Massage as a temporary or supplementary job and did not feel that licensing was worthwhile
- Thought they were capable of providing massage services, did not see the need to be licensed
- Employers and clients hire unlicensed massage practitioners
Recommendations

I. Improve dissemination of information about licensing requirements
   - Provide licensing information in multiple languages
   - Reach out to API massage practitioner communities
   - Educate massage clients about licensure requirements.

II. Provide educational support for massage therapist training
   - Develop scholarship-type program for the massage therapist training
   - Develop internship program for the massage therapist training
   - Develop multi-language massage therapist training program.

III. Improve accessibility for licensure examination
   - Provide multi-language support for the examination
   - Provide multi-layer licensure qualifications

IV. Enforce licensure requirements in a consistent and equitable manner

V. Develop trust and relationship with the community
THANK YOU!