

**A Report on a Survey of Graduates of Maternity Massage Therapy Certification Courses  
Developed by Carole Osborne, Conducted Spring 2009**

After almost 3 decades of teaching maternity bodywork and massage, I wanted to know: Who of my former students are practicing this work and where? What percentage of their practice is prenatal work? What are therapists’ fees and practice settings like? Who are they engaging with collaboratively? What effects are their clients reporting to them? What are the challenges and rewards of their perinatal work? With these questions in mind, I undertook the task of surveying graduates of my childbearing-related certification courses.

An experienced public health researcher, Jane Serling MSPH, and I pilot tested and then finalized a questionnaire. We then mailed or emailed them to more than 3000 therapists who had been my students, from as far back as the mid-1980s on through to the most recent certified graduates. We received 247 surveys over a two-month period, which was a response rate of only about 8%. This low response rate was the one predominant methodological limitation. It is due in part to surveys not reaching the intended recipients, as we were unable to verify addresses or mail follow-up surveys. In full recognition that those practitioners who returned surveys are not representative of all practitioners, we continued with our task of drawing meaningful conclusions from the information that we had. These results are shown in the table

and selected comments from some of the surveys that follows.

Despite the shortcomings of this survey, the information provided by massage therapists from across the country gives us an unprecedented glimpse into the practices of those who pursued 32 hours or more of hands-on training in pregnancy, labor, and postpartum massage. It paints some broad strokes for your consideration that may inform and inspire you as you begin or nurture your maternity massage practice.

Survey Results

Description	Percentage of Responders
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
Living in the US	95%
Took the author's course since 2000	66%
<b>PREPARATION AND EDUCATION</b>	
Have had some additional maternity-related massage therapy courses	26%
Have had no other maternity-related professional training	35%
Have had infant massage training	40%
Have multiple areas of “specialized training, focused interest, and competency”	99%
Specialization in myofascial/deep tissue work	61%
Specialization in neuromuscular therapy	40%
<b>PRACTICE SETTING &amp; CLIENTELLE</b>	
Private practice	72%

Spa setting	13%
Medical practice or hospital	6%
Chiropractic or other health care office	6%
Maternity or women's wellness center	2%
< 25% of clients are maternity-related	78%
26% to 50% of clients are maternity-related	14%
>50% of clients are maternity-related	8%
<b>FEES FOR 1-HOUR PRENATAL SESSION</b>	
\$61 to \$85	53%
\$60 or less	31%
\$86 or more	12%
Use a sliding scale	2%
<b>FEES FOR LABOR MASSAGE</b>	
Practice labor massage	19%
Offer a package price for services	42%
Charge hourly fee	29%
Use sliding scale	29%
<b>MOST COMMON REASONS CLIENTS SEEK MASSAGE</b>	
Low back pain	67%
Relaxation, stress reduction, help with sleeping	60%
Upper back/neck and shoulder pain	48%
Sacrum and pelvic pain	32%
Sciatica and "similar sensations"	28%
Preparation for labor (including breathing techniques)	6%
Edema	4%
Symphysis pubis pain	1%
<b>EFFECTS OF MASSAGE ON PREGNANT CLIENTS</b>	
Clients reporting a reduction in pregnancy-related pain and discomfort	95%

Unsure of how clients feel after massage	3%
<b>DOES MASSAGE HELP TO BEGIN EFFECTIVE LABOR FOR WOMEN PAST THEIR DUE DATE?</b>	
Unsure	~50%
Yes	33%
No	11%
<b>CLIENTS RETURNING FOR POSTPARTUM MASSAGE SESSIONS IN FIRST 3 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH</b>	
<25% of clients return	66%
>25% of clients return	31%
<b>BIGGEST REWARD FOR WORKING WITH PRE- AND PERINATAL CLIENTS</b>	
Providing nurturing and helping women to feel more comfortable, more relaxed, and less pain	66%
Empowering women by helping them to become more aware of, connected to, and trusting of their bodies	25%
Contributing to the development of the mother's relationship with her baby, family, and the family of humanity	6%
<b>BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN WORKING WITH PRE- AND PERINATAL CLIENTS</b>	
Getting clients to come in for bodywork early in pregnancy	30%
The medicalization of childbirth	19%
Not having given birth myself	12%
My own body mechanics while doing maternity massage	12%
Getting clients to connect with their bodies	6%
Getting women positioned comfortably on the table	6%
Lack of confidence in my skills and education	6%
Getting women to relax during pregnancy	4%

### **Some Representative Comments:**

*This has been such a large impact on my life taking this class. I have increased my clientele and it has been so rewarding for me mentally, physically and emotionally to provide a beneficial massage to an individual during such an important time in her life.*

I thank Carole for the confidence as a male therapist starting out in 1992 and my Moms to be and Moms now have a prenatal therapist they can depend on. Thanks Carole.

*I can't quite remember when I took the training, mid 90s I think. I have since become an acupuncturist and integrated all my bodywork training. I have used knowledge and techniques from your class for years--it was so thorough and informative and gave me a lot of confidence to work with pregnancy and labor. Many practitioners are hesitant to work with pregnant women, especially with the possibility of numerous complications. I carry \$1-3,000,000 malpractice but never really worry because I feel so prepared. I have attended over 40 births and every one was a gift to me, allowing me to be present and helpful. Thank you for the teachings!*

*This skill set is such a nice compliment to my work as a prenatal genetic counselor. For patients who have received an adverse prenatal diagnosis, massage can help tremendously to relieve the emotional and mental stress as well as the physical.*

*When speaking with clients postpartum they feel comfortable and relaxed around their babies as they have developed a great sense of skilled relaxation through massage and an increased sense of body awareness translates into more confidence for them and their babies.*

### **15 years of pregnancy massage and still loving it!**

*As a birth doula and MT, I believe that pregnancy massage is the best preparation for childbirth. Massage gives a woman the opportunity to experience her body becoming soft and open and it helps her to connect with her baby in a very profound and peaceful way. When I massage my birth doula clients throughout their pregnancy, they need very little in labor to be reminded of that deep place within themselves that they experiences many times during their massage sessions. It is a great privelege to do this work!*

*Having my own child bearing experiences, I have deep respect and understanding for the value of pre and perinatal care, both on physical and emotional levels. It is essential to be mindful of each client's experience throughout pregnancy and child birth. Hope to see you again soon! I'm looking forward to your next Advanced seminar. Hopefully I'll be able to attend.*

*I have had a couple of clients who come for mental health--which seemed to me different than "stress reduction" or "general wellbeing." One was feeling overwhelmed at the thought of a second child (her first child was very difficult); the other had chosen to have a second child but hated being pregnant. A specific patient brought her in initially, but she received psychological benefits that kept her coming back weekly.*

I was able to work with a woman last week late 3rd trimester just put on bed rest for elevated blood pressure. About 3/4 of the way through the session, I was drawn to do a little face and scalp work and she just started laughing and laughing almost crying and saying "this just feels so good" with notes of thank you and how come I've waited so long, and even something this simple feels so amazing. I love this work so much, it bursts my heart open wide every session. Thanks for sharing your beautiful experiences and knowledge. Take care.

*It has been a very rewarding modality for my practice. I love getting to know these women better and watch their families grow. It fills a void from not having children of my own to be able to make this journey more comfortable for others. Thank you!*

*It is an awesome gift for women. It is always amazing to me that these women invite me to be a part of their pregnancy and sometimes their labor too! What an honor. Carole and staff: Thank you for providing the training to help those of us interested in this unique time in a woman's life to be confident and comfortable providing bodywork to our clients!*

It's just a joy to nurture and encourage and support the pregnant moms who come to me for bodywork. We often develop a close, bonded relationship, while still maintaining the professionalism between client and practitioner. It's been very rewarding and heart warming to see my clients visibly improve on all levels (mind, body, spirit) from one session to the next :)

*Many of my pre and perinatal clients have pointed out my priority as a health care provider. In other words, my practice sees more and more clients who consider prenatal bodywork as mainstream as opposed to alternative health care.*

Pre and Perinatal massage is a thread that weaves through my practice...makes it more complete. My competence that I achieved through your training set the standard early in my career. A standard of excellence!

*The baby photos on my wall touch every heart that enters, brings up stories in many.  
Thank you Carole.*

*There is the most rewarding feeling after a client has given birth and they both come to a session and the baby recognizes your voice and the music and settles right in.*

*Though it is a small part of my practice it is one of the most rewarding and life affirming for me to work with women during their pregnancies.*