



# ISMETA

International Somatic Movement  
Education & Therapy Association

## INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE DOCUMENTS

Somatic Movement Education and Therapy is an emerging profession with applications in the fields of healthcare, education, social justice and the arts. All established professions have a Scope of Practice, Standards of Practice, and Code of Ethics to articulate exemplary behavior to abide by. To support the further development and professionalization of our work, ISMETA has not only revised these documents, but we have also developed a list of core competencies or measurable skills that characterize a qualified somatic movement educator/ therapist. Combined with our Code of Ethics, Scope of Practice and Standards of Practice, these pillars of our profession are living documents that will be refined according to the needs of our profession, in the months and years ahead.

## SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The purpose of somatic movement education and therapy is to enhance human functioning and body-mind integration through movement awareness. Our profession, as represented by ISMETA, encompasses distinct methods or approaches, each with its own educational or therapeutic emphasis, principles, and techniques.

These practices of somatic movement education and therapy include:

- postural and movement observations
- experiential anatomy and physiology explorations
- movement patterning and re-patterning
- communication and guidance through touch, verbal cues, and/or demonstration

Each method helps students and clients in some way to:

- increase awareness of the sensations of the moving body, including interoception and proprioception
- focus on the body both as an objective physical process and as a subjective process of lived consciousness
- recognize habitual patterns of perceptual, postural and movement interactions with the environment
- discover new possibilities for perceptual, postural and movement interactions with the environment

Somatic movement education and therapy can be applied to both pedestrian and specialized activities for people in various contexts across the lifespan. The work can be communicated either on an individual basis or with groups, and it is done fully-clothed.

Somatic movement education and therapy does *not* include:

- psychotherapy
- physical therapy
- massage therapy
- diagnosis of medical conditions
- prescription of medications

## CORE COMPETENCIES

Professional competencies are knowledge, skills and practices that are measurable, i.e., observable and can be assessed. The following core competencies are the minimum required to become an ISMETA professional.

The ISMETA recognized practitioner is able to:

1. Demonstrate the primary movement principles of the system(s) they trained in;
2. Articulate observations of the client's posture/somatic organization;
3. Describe observations of the client's movement processes;
4. Design movement activities to support the client's somatic awareness;
5. Facilitate movement activities to cultivate the client's somatic awareness;
6. Develop lesson plans to foster movement repatterning;
7. Lead experiential explorations of anatomical structures and physiological processes;
8. Demonstrate skillful use of verbal and non-verbal communication;
9. Demonstrate the process for engaging in ethical touch;
10. Distinguish between activities that are inside and outside of ISMETA's Scope of Practice.

## STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The following **Standards of Practice** establish guidelines for the conduct of ISMETA-recognized practitioners.

***Standard I – Education and Training*** In the interest of the public and the profession as a whole, an ISMETA-recognized practitioner practices only after fulfilling credential requirements.

***Standard II: Practitioner Responsibilities*** In their professional role, ISMETA-recognized practitioners shall:

1. Be knowledgeable of the Scope of Practice and practice within those limitations;
2. Develop a clear agreement with clients about the nature and scope of work together, particularly when they have additional professional practices outside of ISMETA's Scope of Practice;
3. Obtain informed written consent from clients prior to providing services;
4. Display and/or discuss schedule of fees in advance of the session that are clearly understood by the student or client;
5. Recognize their personal limitations as practitioners and make appropriate referrals for clients to other professionals when needed;
6. Seek professional supervision when needed;
7. Engage in ongoing professional development, including regular self-assessment of strengths, limitations and effectiveness and participation in continued education and training;
8. Maintain adequate and confidential progress notes for each client session;
9. Recognize the value of constructive feedback from clients in sessions, students in classes, and participants in research, and strive to work professionally, self-critically, and creatively within the inherent holism of somatic work;
10. Provide a safe physical setting that meets all applicable legal requirements for health and safety;
11. Use standard precautions to ensure professional hygienic practices, and maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene;
12. Maintain adequate and customary liability insurance;
13. Be prompt with payment of professional dues.

**Standard III: Self-Representation as a Professional** To accurately represent their professional work, ISMETA-recognized practitioners shall:

14. Honestly represent all professional qualifications and affiliations, including but not limited to use of appropriate ISMETA credentials;
15. Promote their business with integrity and avoid potential and actual conflicts of interest;
16. Accurately and truthfully inform the public of the types of services provided in advertising and marketing, and refrain from misrepresenting their fees, credentials, training, skillset, or results;
17. Not use sensational, sexual, culturally-appropriated or provocative language or images to promote business;
18. Only use the ISMETA credentials when their membership is current through timely payment of dues.

**Standard IV: Legal Rights and Compliance** ISMETA-recognized practitioners must comply with all legal requirements in applicable jurisdictions that regulate the profession of somatic movement education and therapy. In their professional role, ISMETA-recognized practitioners shall:

20. Obey all applicable local, regional and national laws, including obtaining and maintaining business licensing and professional registration required by the nation, state, province, or local jurisdiction in which they practice;
21. Report to ISMETA any criminal convictions;
21. Report to ISMETA any pending litigation and resulting resolution related to their practice;
22. Follow customary accounting practices, file all applicable taxes, and maintain accurate financial records, contracts and legal obligations, appointment records, tax reports and receipts for at least three years;
23. Respect existing publishing rights and copyright laws.

**Standard V: Professional Relationships with Clients** ISMETA-recognized practitioners are responsible for maintaining an appropriate professional relationship with clients and students. This includes awareness of power dynamics, emotional and sexual boundaries, and creating and maintaining safety.

A. ISMETA-recognized practitioners acknowledge that cultural frameworks across the globe afford different value and power to people according to their identities related to age, race, gender, sexual preference, socioeconomic status, differing abilities, body size, and primary language. In their practice, ISMETA professionals shall:

24. Respect that a client's experience of living in a body may vary dramatically from the practitioner's, depending on their identities listed above;
25. Refrain from being discriminatory towards clients;
26. Identify, learn and engage in processes for understanding their own cultural biases, and seek out supervision if issues/conflicts arise related to any of the identities listed above.

B. ISMETA-recognized practitioners must be cautious about assuming the role of a professional with family members, close friends, or closely-associated employees and colleagues. Fulfilling the role of informed and caring adviser, however, is not precluded. In such cases, the ISMETA recognized practitioner shall:

28. Be responsible for creating a clear demarcation in, and ensure that both parties are aware of, the shift from the client-practitioner session to the social setting of the personal relationship;
29. Acknowledge and respect the client's freedom of choice and right to refuse services;
29. Recognize their influential position with the client and avoid exploitation of the relationship for personal or other gain;
30. Clarify all dual relationships that could impair professional judgment.

C. Sexual relationships with clients are prohibited. In their professional role, ISMETA-recognized practitioners shall:

32. Avoid the exploitation of the trust and dependency of others, including clients and employees;
33. Refrain from any behavior that demeans or disempowers clients;
33. Recognize that the intimacy of the practitioner-client relationship may stimulate sexual feelings or memories;
34. Understand that sexual intimacy is inappropriate, as is the use of touch on any part of the client's body for which they do not provide consent (as an individual or part of a group, in therapeutic and/or educational settings);
35. Refrain from sexual involvement with a current client, even if the client initiates or consents to the contact;
36. Seek and obtain professional supervision before becoming sexually involved with a former client;
37. Comply with all local, regional and national laws regarding sexual harassment.

**Standard VI: Client – Practitioner Confidentiality** ISMETA-recognized practitioners shall respect the confidentiality of client information and safeguard all records. In their professional role, the practitioner shall:

38. Protect the client's identity and pertinent information in conversations, written communications, and all other contexts unless requested by the client in writing, medically necessary, or mandated by law;
39. Protect the interests of clients who are minors or who are unable to give voluntary consent by securing permission from an appropriate third party or guardian;
40. Solicit only information that is relevant to the professional client/practitioner relationship;
41. Maintain client files for a minimum period of three years and store and dispose of client files in a secure manner.

**Standard VII: Inter-collegial Relationships** ISMETA-recognized practitioners understand the need for collaboration with others within our profession and the fields of health and human services, education and the arts. To further cultivate professional relationships, practitioners shall:

42. Develop collegial relationships and show respect for diversity among colleagues and associates related to age, race, gender identity, ethnicity, primary language, religion, sexual orientation, differing abilities, and socio-economic status;
43. Show respect for the full range of methods, styles, educational training and backgrounds of colleagues;
44. Act with integrity and in a constructive manner with colleagues, other organizations, agencies, institutions, referral sources and other professionals;
45. Possess basic knowledge of the nature of other somatic movement practices while maintaining clear identification of one's own expertise;
46. Never impugn the reputation of any colleague;
47. Clearly identify and give credit to ideas, techniques, and principles derived from other people, disciplines and methods within the field when teaching or sharing them, particularly in regards to written publications, dissertation research and training program curricula that integrate different methods of somatic movement education and/or therapy.

**Standard VIII: Grievance Procedures** ISMETA-recognized practitioners must provide an opportunity for clients or students to contact ISMETA and file a grievance if they have complaints regarding the ethical conduct of a practitioner. Within one week after a complaint is registered with the practitioner, the practitioner must provide the complainant with the ISMETA Grievance Procedure. In the case of a grievance, ISMETA professional members agree to participate in the Grievance Procedure with integrity and courtesy.

# CODE OF ETHICS

This Code of Ethics defines exemplary behavior for the somatic movement professional. Adherence to this Code is a prerequisite for admission to and continued membership in ISMETA.

An ISMETA recognized professional adheres to the following principles:

- Demonstrate a commitment to professional excellence and the highest quality of services.
- Present a professional and honest image when dealing with the public.
- Accept responsibility for creating the conditions that promote and protect the physical, mental and emotional well-being of clients and students.
- Respect that the body, mind, emotions and spirit are dynamically interrelated, and that explorations in one of these aspects may reverberate through other levels.
- Value the inherent dignity and worth of each person by learning not to discriminate or behave in any prejudicial manner with clients and/or colleagues.
- Honor the Standards of Practice and Scope of Practice of ISMETA.

In addition, ISMETA professionals are learning to recognize that our individual and collective bodies are shaped differently according to our identities and locations within social, political, and economic power structures.

Furthermore, we aspire to acknowledge that our somas are integral parts of the web of life, and to respect the sanctity of the living systems that sustain us.