

IAYT Takes Steps to Certify Yoga Therapists

By Aggie Stewart

In 2013, IAYT successfully launched an accreditation process for yoga therapy training programs and by November 2014 had accredited seventeen programs. More accreditation applications are in the process of being evaluated and new accreditation decisions are made at monthly meetings of the Accreditation Committee.

With the accreditation process well underway, IAYT is turning its attention to creating the structure, criteria, and processes for certifying individual yoga therapists. Three initial avenues are envisioned: one avenue for graduates of accredited programs and two for grandparenting those currently practicing as yoga therapists who have yoga therapy experience and education other than through IAYT-accredited programs. The initial certification process will include a period of time (yet to be defined) for grandparenting yoga therapists.

The Grandparenting Process

Grandparenting refers to a process in which someone with the requisite experience and expertise in a particular profession is granted certification without being required to meet the same criteria that others just entering the profession have to meet. Typically, grandparenting status is offered to seasoned practitioners who began practicing in a profession at a time when educational levels and training programs were different, yet the practitioner has extensive experience in the field. Seasoned practicing yoga therapists are those who have many years of clinical experience but may not have taken a well-documented, formal educational program in yoga therapy that meets the new standards. The grandparenting process usually begins just after a profession starts to certify practitioners and is limited to a prescribed period of time.

This past summer, John Kepner, executive director of IAYT, appointed an interim committee to begin fleshing out the details for the grandparenting criteria and process and to make recommendations to the forthcoming Certification Committee. This group included Leigh Blashki and

Hansa Knox, who both served on the Educational Standards Committee and the Accreditation Committee for IAYT, along with Amy Wheeler as the IAYT board liaison. The group's focus was to develop criteria for grandparenting, including prior education, practicum, and/or clinical experience requirements.

Charge to the Certification Committee

This past fall, the IAYT board of directors appointed the full Certification Committee and formalized the charge to the committee (see Page 35). The committee is composed of Leigh Blashki, MHSc; Clare Collins, RN, PhD, FAAN, CYT, E-RYT500 (who also served on the Educational Standards Committee); Bev Johnson, MBA, PRYT, RYT500; and Swami Ramananda. Beth Whitney-Teeple, PhD, RYT, CYT, will be the certification manager. Amy Wheeler, PhD, is the board liaison; John Kepner, MA, MBA, E-RYT500, is an ex-officio member. Daniel Seitz, JD, EdD, will serve as facilitator and advisor to the group; Dan also served in this capacity for the Educational Standards Committee and is presently doing the same for the Accreditation Committee. The Certification Committee will begin by working with the recommendations of the interim committee. Once a full draft of the criteria is complete, it will be presented to the membership for review and comments.

During the next twelve to twenty-four months, as the committee moves forward to finalize the certification criteria, yoga therapists interested in certification can take a number of preparatory steps.

In drafting the requirements, the Certification Committee will stay close to the definitions and requirements already established in the Educational Standards. Practicum requirements will include yoga therapy work with clients or therapeutic groups that are overseen by a mentor with appropriate qualifications and experience. To ensure consistency between the accreditation and certification processes, the Certification Committee is working with definitions for terms such as mentoring that are included in the standards.

Preparatory Steps You Can Take

During the next twelve to twenty-four months, as the Certification Committee moves forward to finalize the certification

criteria—the application, application process, policies, and procedures that will govern the certification undertaking—yoga therapists interested in certification can take a number of preparatory steps.

First, read the several Perspectives in the 2014 *International Journal of Yoga Therapy* and another in this issue of *Yoga Therapy Today* (see Page 40), which speak to the differences between

- a yoga teacher and a yoga therapist,
- a yoga class and a yoga therapy class, and
- the training for a yoga teacher and for a yoga therapist.

It's important to understand the distinctions between these roles and activities. Keep good, organized records of all yoga and yoga therapy education, training program(s), and mentored practicums in which you have participated or are currently participating. Document specifics, including the name of each program or workshop, faculty who taught the curriculum, number of hours, start and end dates, and whether a certificate or diploma was issued. Acquire the syllabi when possible and the faculty qualifications. Maintain detailed client records, including whether sessions were individual or group, client intakes and assessments conducted, and the number of hours and dates of each individual and group session. If you don't have exact records, do the best you can to document reasonable estimates of what you have done, where you did it, and for

whom (e.g., private work, hospital, clinic). Be prepared to provide examples of client assessments that you use to evaluate client progress along with what you teach clients. Create and maintain a yoga therapy resume or CV, following all the principles of professional resume or CV development. Excellent models are available online.

This type of record keeping constitutes good professional business practices, as well as serving you in your certification application via one of the grandparenting avenues. For the most up-to-date information on accreditation, grandparenting, and certification, regularly visit the IAYT website and look for updates in future issues of *Yoga Therapy Today*. [YTT](#)

IAYT Board Charge to the Certification Committee

Approved July 30, 2014

Certification Committee Structure

The Certification Committee (CC) shall be a semi-autonomous, standing committee of the IAYT board of directors appointed by the IAYT president in consultation with IAYT board members, the executive director, and current members of the CC. The CC shall conduct its work in accordance with a set of bylaws approved by the board, and shall work in partnership with a CC manager appointed by the executive director in consultation with CC members. The CC manager shall report to the executive director, and shall be responsible for the administration and operations of the CC; see below for further information on the role of the CC manager.

Primary Charge to the Certification Committee

The primary charge to the CC is to develop the criteria, policies, and procedures—including the application materials—to grant and maintain IAYT certification as a yoga therapist in a manner that is consistent with (i) the IAYT Educational Standards, (ii) the IAYT accreditation process for yoga therapy programs, and (iii) the general certification guidelines and avenues articulated previously by IAYT, as outlined below.

Additional Charges to the Certification Committee

- To recommend a Code of Conduct/ Statement of Ethics for IAYT certification
- To recommend continuing education requirements for IAYT certification

The CC may also develop other proposals to present to the IAYT board related to the certification process, and may be charged with other tasks that are essential—or directly related—to its primary charge.

Certification Guidelines and Avenues

IAYT certification is an IAYT member benefit and hence will only be available to IAYT members.

Currently, there are three avenues envisioned for IAYT certification of yoga therapists:

1. *Graduation from an IAYT-accredited yoga therapy training program.* Graduates of an IAYT-accredited yoga therapy program will be eligible to apply for certification.

2. *Grandparenting with educational requirements.* A graduate of a 300-hour yoga therapy training program, who started that program prior to January 1, 2014, will be eligible to apply for certification, provided that he/she (i) completed a yoga therapy training program that consisted of at least 300 hours of instruction and required a 200-hour teacher training program as a minimum admission requirement, and (ii) completed at least 150 hours of mentored practicum or practical yoga therapy experience, or a combination of both, prior to January 1, 2017.

3. *Grandparenting for “seasoned yoga therapists.”* There are a number of yoga therapists who may not have graduated from a formal training program, but who have been practicing for a significant length of time and are the pioneers of our field. The CC will develop a grandparenting avenue for these practitioners that honors their seminal role in establishing the yoga therapy field and that is appropriate to the time when they sought training and entered practice.

For published IAYT grandparenting guidelines to date, refer to Emerging Guidelines for Grandparenting Yoga Therapists (revised January 15, 2014)¹ and FAQ on Emerging Grandparenting Guidelines (November 26, 2013).²

An important initial responsibility of the CC is to more fully develop the criteria for qualifying 300-hour yoga therapy training programs, yoga therapy experience, and the mentored practicum so that IAYT members who anticipate applying through one of the two grandparenting avenues have sufficient time to develop documentation for their training and experience. This will also be helpful to training programs that are developing or refining mentored practicums for grandparenting.

Once the certification process is fully developed and implemented, it is anticipated that the actual granting of certification will be primarily an administrative process carried out by IAYT staff, based on the criteria, policies, and procedures established by the Committee. It is further anticipated that the Committee will be the decision-making body for cases that fall outside of established policies, a situation that will likely occur more frequently in the first few years, and will serve as an appeals body for applicants who are denied certification administratively.

Financing the Certification Process

The committee is responsible for recommending appropriate fees to IAYT for submitting the certification application and maintaining certification. Fee recommendations shall be developed in consultation with the IAYT executive director. In general, fees should be set at a level sufficient to support the costs of providing the certification service, including an appropriate contribution to IAYT's overhead expenses; additionally, fee income should be sufficient to recover over time the expenditures required to create and implement the certification process. [YTT](#)

For the full text of the Charge to the Committee, visit http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/certification_documents/charge_to_certification_comm.pdf

References

- ¹ http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/AccreditationMaterials/Guidelines-Grandparenting_rv.pdf
- ² http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iayt.org/resource/resmgr/accreditationmaterials/faq_on_grandparenting_guidel.pdf

Author's Note: This is the third article in a series on IAYT's self-regulation efforts. The previous two articles are “IAYT Accreditation: Why It's Needed, How It Was Created, and What It Means for You,” which appeared in the Winter 2013 issue and “The Credentialing of Yoga Therapists,” which appeared in the Spring 2014 issue. I have appreciated comments and input from IAYT's executive director John Kepner, Accreditation Committee chair Hansa Knox, and former Accreditation Committee member Leigh Blashki on each of the articles in this series.



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people who have rheumatoid arthritis at IAYT's Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research in 2011 and published a paper on that work in the 2013 edition of the International Journal of Yoga Therapy.