



NBFE

National Board of Fitness Examiners

Personal Training Licensing
SURVEY RESULTS



National Board of Fitness Examiners

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2006 Report

NBFE Personal Training Survey Results

Over the past 10 years, many states have drafted initiatives or proposed legislative bills that would have required personal fitness trainers (PFTs) or other fitness professionals to become state licensed. While to date, none of these bills have become law, one of the more recently proposed bills, Georgia SB401, stated a desire to utilize the National Board of Fitness Examiners' (NBFE) test results as a means to assess the qualifications of PFTs in that state for licensure purposes.

While the NBFE did not contribute to, nor promote licensure in Georgia, the NBFE does believe that the fitness profession can best be served by utilizing a standardized national board examination to evaluate and test the qualifications of PFTs and other fitness professionals. The test process could be used as a model if states feel the need to license those in this profession.

Since its inception in 2003, the NBFE has supported the utilization of a nationally standardized written and practical exam to assess PFT qualifications. The NBFE believes this process can be used in lieu of requiring personal trainers to sit for 50 different state board examinations in order to obtain a license. The NBFE believes that a PFT in New York should meet the same qualifications and possess the same knowledge and skills as a trainer in California. If a PFT moves to a different state, a standardized national board examination credential should be sufficient to obtain a license, if the new state of residence requires a license.

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At this time, the NBFE does not endorse, support or lobby for or against licensure of any fitness professional, but rather believes that the industry should listen to the opinions of personal trainers working in the field before taking any stance on the licensure issue. In an attempt to begin the process of finding out how personal trainers feel about licensing, the NBFE recently deployed the largest survey ever conducted in the fitness industry on the subject.

The NBFE polled a randomly sampled group of personal fitness trainers, who hold a wide array of degrees and fitness certification credentials. Of the trainers polled, 0.5% have some high school education; 32.9% have some college education; 40.5% are college graduates (including those holding Associate's Degrees); 6.0% have some graduate education; and 20.1% hold graduate degrees (Master's/PhD, other doctorates).

This randomly sampled group of 2730 respondents revealed interesting findings. An overwhelming majority of respondents (76%) agree or strongly agree that licensing of personal trainers will increase the perception of professionalism of personal trainers in the public eye. Similarly, 75.4% feel that licensing of personal trainers will facilitate referrals from traditional health care providers, and 61% feel that insurance companies will be more likely to reimburse for services if personal trainers are licensed. 62.7% agree or strongly agree that

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they would like to be denoted as a “licensed personal trainer;” however, less than half (47%) of respondents believe that licensing will lead to better pay for personal trainers. Overall, the majority of the respondents support the idea of having a national board exam over the alternative of state-specific exams, with 62.5% favoring a national exam and 19.5% of respondents being neutral on the issue. Among those who favor a state-specific exam, 79.5% believe that the specifics of the exam should be guided by a national board of experts, rather than the states themselves.

The survey demonstrated that there may be a general sense of discontent with the level of professional competence currently existing in the field, since close to two-thirds of participants reported that they have come into contact with trainers who they felt were incompetent in their work. Similarly, two-thirds believe that national licensing will help “weed out” trainers who are professionally deficient.

With regard to feasibility of developing a fair and objective exam, 70.4% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that it would be possible to accomplish this goal, with an additional 17% feeling neutral about this item.

The results of this first of several contemplated NBFE surveys will help us study various aspects of the profession and the needs of personal fitness trainers. We strongly encourage all organizations to work together

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toward the identification and ultimate achievement of goals that best serve the entire profession.

The NBFE believes that by incorporating data gathered from surveys of trainers who are located in diverse areas across the country, all of whom work daily with clients, it will provide objective information and more accurate views held by those in the profession. This information should ultimately guide the evolution and future for fitness professionals, and move the industry forward.

Although the results of the survey have already been calculated, you can access survey questions at nbfe.org/survey/survey.cfm.