



Vocational Training Regulations Should Not Apply to Yoga Teacher Training Programs

Overview

- Under Alaska law, yoga instructors – like martial arts and dance instructors – are not required to hold a license in order to teach yoga. The vast majority of individuals who lead yoga classes in Alaska are *not* full-time instructors and do *not* earn a living from teaching.
- Within the yoga community, studios and practitioners host advanced yoga training classes that are called yoga teacher training programs or “YTTs.” The name “teacher training,” however, is a misnomer because most participants attend only to deepen their personal practice or practice yoga in a group setting. Further, *completion of a YTT program is not a prerequisite to teach yoga.*
- In recent months, the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) has informed several YTT programs in the state that they must follow regulations intended for postsecondary institutions and vocational programs. As a result, YTTs, which are primarily women-owned, small businesses, are subject to burdensome requirements and required to pay expensive fees.
- Many members of the yoga community, business owners, and concerned Alaska residents oppose the imposition of the ACPE’s regulations on YTTs because they are both unnecessary and onerous.

Regulating YTTs as Vocational Programs is Unnecessary

- ACPE’s mandate is to regulate postsecondary educational institutions that offer academic, vocational, or professional education “for attainment of educational, professional, or vocational objectives.” Alaska Stat. § 14.48.210. YTTs are not designed to prepare individuals to enter the workforce; rather, most participants in YTT programs attend only to practice advanced yoga, and only a minority of participants ever go on to become full-time instructors. As such, YTT programs are best classified as *avocational activities, not vocational training or professional education.*
- In Alaska, yoga instruction itself is *not* a licensed profession or occupation and completing a YTT program is not a prerequisite for an individual to become a yoga instructor. In fact, there are *no* prerequisites to teach yoga; indeed, only a small minority of yoga instructors complete a YTT before leading yoga classes.
- Applying vocational education regulations to YTTs effectively constitutes a solution in search of a problem. The yoga community is unaware of any consumer complaints about Alaska YTTs that would necessitate ACPE involvement. Further, exempting YTTs from the current regulatory scheme would only remove these programs from regulations designed for “vocational” schools. *All other state, federal, and local business, consumer protection, and premises safety regulations will still apply to Alaska’s YTTs.*

Regulating YTTs is Harmful to the Yoga Community and the State

- Most YTTs are small businesses, and the majority are owned and operated by women. The time and expense to comply with ACPE’s mandates (e.g., \$2,500 initial fee plus renewal fees; requirement to maintain a catalog) *have a detrimental effect* on independent studios. The current regulatory climate dissuades yoga providers from offering or expanding YTT programs.
- Extensive and expensive regulations inherently favor large, established studios, creating *an unfair advantage* for such studios and establishing a barrier to entry for small, independent yoga entrepreneurs.