

# Moving Toward Standards for Training Yoga Therapists

*by Nayaswami Mangala*

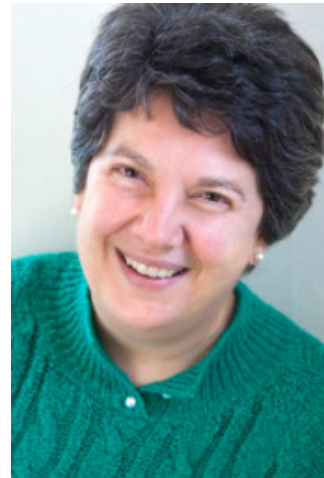
Last summer saw an historic meeting of some 40 schools that currently train Yoga Therapists and are member schools of the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT). On August 31–September 1, 2011, I was able to meet with about 70 other people at Asilomar, CA, plus IAYT’s Board of Directors and their Standards Committee, which recently submitted a first-draft proposal for [Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists](#).

The volunteer Standards Committee has been working for two years to develop this proposal. They presented it to the member schools to get feedback for the next draft in support of IAYT’s stated mission to establish Yoga as a recognized and respected therapy.

## Ananda’s Perspective

We at Ananda had previously expressed via email some significant concerns about the draft standards. Among these were:

- Spiritual and lifestyle aspects of yoga therapy were not adequately addressed.
- Too much emphasis on Western medical and psychological competencies, and not enough on Ayurveda, which is Yoga’s original medical model.
- 800-hours (post 200-hour YTT) was too high for an entry-level credential in yoga therapy.



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I’m happy to report that upon meeting the members of the Standards Committee, and hearing them speak about yoga and yoga therapy, I was greatly reassured that we were more in sync with them than their draft proposal had made it seem. It was also reassuring to hear that many others shared the first two concerns listed above. And although the majority of participants favored the 800-hour requirement, there were also some who wanted less hours and some who wanted more hours. I presented our idea of having two levels of standards, with an entry level requiring 400-500 hours after the initial 200-hour YTT.

## Looking Ahead

Despite diverse opinions, the three sessions were harmonious, productive, and inspiring. It felt like a group of yogis who were committed to bringing the health benefits of all aspects of Yoga to benefit this world! Yes, there are still many details to work out, but I have high hopes that it will happen in a way that relieves our concerns. The professional facilitator of the meeting said that he was awed by how far this process has already

progressed (compared to other groups embarking on similar processes), and that he expected this was because we were all practicing Yoga. He predicted that there would probably be a final set of standards within a year or so. The committee plans to present at least one, and probably two, more drafts of the Standards so that all who are interested will have an opportunity to give further feedback before the standards are finalized.

At this time, IAYT is focused on standards for *schools* that prepare yoga teachers to become yoga therapists. They have not yet declared any intention of credentialing *individual practitioners*, so that issue will be dealt with later.

As Ananda's representative, I will continue to do my best to encourage that these standards be compatible with the larger view of Yoga that Ananda takes. Please keep this process in your prayers!