



Published 01:05, June the 12th, 2009

State yoga licensing law goes to the mat

Vocational school requirement has training centers tied up in knots

Too many downward dogs sent Janice Petrovich to a doctor. She was given a cortisone shot to relieve the pain in the "trigger finger" she developed from the yoga position that puts the body's weight onto fingertips and feet.

"Yoga teachers and yoga society has been extremely mindful of self-regulation. It has not run amok." Jill Satterfield of Vajra Yoga, a teacher training center

"I never knew whether I positioned my finger correctly," the 62-year-old said.

There are hundreds of yoga instructors, but none of them are trained by state-licensed schools.

In April, the state Department of Education threatened 79 yoga training centers — schools that teach the teachers — with closure and \$50,000 fines if they didn't get vocational school licenses, just as schools that teach mechanics and others are required to have.

Dr. Jeffrey Goldstein, a spine specialist at NYU Hospital, sees a lot of yoga-related injuries, but added, a lot of patients "do yoga to treat their spines to feel better."

Several states regulate yoga because it's a \$6 billion industry, said Mark Davis, president of the Yoga Alliance, which sets yoga certification standards. The licenses are "forcing this ancient tradition to conform to Western business practices," he said.

Yoga complaints are "scant," said Tom Dunn, an education department spokesman. He said the agency is working with yoga training centers to help them comply.

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