



What's in a Name: Nursing Licensure Compact

One (1.0) Contact Hour

Course Published: June 2019

Reproduction and distribution of these materials is prohibited without an RN.com content licensing agreement.

Copyright © 2019 by RN.com.

All Rights Reserved.

RN.com is an accredited provider of continuing nursing education by the
American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation

Acknowledgements

RN.com acknowledges the valuable contributions of... Kim Maryniak, PhD, MSN, BN, RNC-NIC, NEA-BC

Conflict of Interest

RN.com strives to present content in a fair and unbiased manner at all times, and has a full and fair disclosure policy that requires course faculty to declare any real or apparent commercial affiliation related to the content of this presentation. Note: Conflict of Interest is defined by ANCC as a situation in which an individual has an opportunity to affect educational content about products or services of a commercial interest with which he/she has a financial relationship.

The author of this course does not have any conflict of interest to declare.

The planners of the educational activity have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

There is no commercial support being used for this course.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide an overview about the Nurse Licensure Compact including description, history and current requirements.

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of boards of nursing and nursing licensure.
2. Understand the history of the Nurse Licensure Compact.
3. Describe the implications and benefits of multistate nursing licensure.
4. Identify current application and participation requirements of the Nurse Licensure Compact.

Introduction

In the United States, requirements for nursing licensure vary from state to state. In addition to single state licensure, many states are participating in a compact for multistate licensure. This gives nurses the ability to practice in more than one state without having to obtain multiple single state licenses.

Nursing Licensure

Within the United States, each state has a board of nurse examiners, otherwise known as a board of nursing. These boards regulate nursing practice within the state by establishing and upholding rules, statutes and nurse practice acts. The boards of nursing also determine a minimal level of nursing competency and establish nursing licensure requirements. Licensure requirements are based on educational requirements and admission standards. Depending on the state, the licensure requirements may be applicable to registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs) or licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) (Maryniak, 2017; Russell, 2017).

In addition to developing licensure requirements, boards of nursing define scope of practice for nurses, describing tasks that RNs, LPNs and APRNs can perform either independently or with providers. These boards also create processes and identify criteria for discipline of nurses, including penalties which effect nursing licensure (Maryniak, 2017; Russell, 2017).

National Council of State Boards of Nursing

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is an independent organization which is a collaborative effort. The focus of the NCSBN is to provide regulations and guidance for upholding public health and protecting the welfare and safety of the public. The NCSBN also upholds safe and competent care by nurses. The members of the NCSBN includes boards of nursing from across the United States and other regulatory bodies. The collaboration focuses on nursing education, competency and licensure (NCSBN, 2019a).

Licensure Model: Single State Model

Historically, the primary model of nurse licensure in the United States has been that nurses are licensed in the state in which they practice. This is referred to as the single state model of licensure. Within this model, nurses contact the board of nursing where they will be practicing to learn that state's specific requirements for licensure. Initial licensing occurs when the nurse follows that state's process and provides the required information, including proof of passing the national licensure examination (such as the NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN exams). Background checks may or may not be required depending on the individual's state's conditions. Initial licensure fees are also paid (NCSBN, 2011).

Nurses can also obtain single state licenses in multiple states by an endorsement process, which again requires them to follow the processes for each state. Licensure endorsement fees must be paid (NCSBN, 2011).

Licensure Model: Multistate Licensure Model

The multistate licensure model allows a nurse to hold a license in one state, but is permitted to practice in multiple states which participate in this model. Through the multistate licensure model, the nurse must uphold the nursing practice act, rules and regulations in the state where s/he provides services (Evans, 2015; NCSBN, 2011).

Test Yourself

The nursing licensure model in which a nurse is licensed and only allowed to practice in one state is known as:

- A. Single state model**
- B. Multistate model
- C. NCLEX model

History of the Nursing Licensure Compact

With the evolution of healthcare, it has been identified that nursing care is more broadly required compared with many years ago. Mobility and flexibility of nursing is a necessity to meet the needs of patients in a variety of settings. Healthcare modalities and advances in technology, such as with the development of telehealth, provide nurses the ability to practice in multiple states. The 1995 report from the Pew Commission and the 2011 Report on the Future of Nursing from the Institute of Medicine described barriers to providing nursing care in different settings and states. These reports noted that access to nursing care can be restricted with the single state model of licensure (Evans, 2015).

In 1997, the NCSBN approved the model of multistate licensure for registered nurses. This became known as the Nursing Licensure Compact (NLC). In the year 2000, the three initial states that participated in the NLC multistate licensure model were Texas, Utah and Wisconsin. By 2013, there was a total of 24 states who participated in the NLC (Evans, 2015).

One of the barriers that was identified to additional states adopting the NLC were variations in state licensure requirements. To address these concerns, the enhanced NLC (eNLC) was developed in 2015 and implemented in 2017. The eNLC implemented licensure requirements that were uniform in nature. Nurses who held NLC licenses had the ability to be grandfathered in to the eNLC, providing that the uniform requirements were met (Evans, 2015; Puente, 2017).

At this time, the eNLC is for RNs and LPNs or LVNs only. Although the NCSBN has been advocating for an APRN compact, this is not currently in place (NCSBN, 2019b).

Benefits of Multistate Licensure

There are many benefits to holding a multistate license. This allows a nurse who is licensed under multistate licensure to practice, whether physically or electronically, in a state that has adopted the interstate compact (eNLC). The ability to practice in multiple states increases mobility and availability of nursing practice. Additionally, there are decreased costs with multistate licensure versus attaining multiple single state licenses.

A multistate license provides benefits by allowing the nurse to practice in his or her home state, as well as participating compact states, with one license. This decreases the costs and time associated with obtaining multiple single state licenses in each state of practice. The eNLC expands access to nursing care, such as the ability for nurses to provide remote care. Multistate licensure is also beneficial for nurses who relocate frequently (NCSBN, 2019b; Puente, 2017).

Test Yourself

Do all nurses qualify for a multistate license?

- a. Yes
- b. No**

Rationale: Currently, the NLC is for RNs, LPN, or LVNs. There is no APRN compact at this time. Nurses must declare a participating compact state as their primary state of residence to be able to obtain multistate licensure.

Types of Nurse who Benefit from Multistate Licensure

Some examples of nurse professionals who can benefit from multistate licensure include:

- Travel or seasonal nurses, or other interim nursing positions
 - Allows travel nurses to easily move between assignments in participating states
- Nurses who live on or near state borders
 - Allows nurses who live on the border of two or more participating states to practice in facilities across state lines
- Telehealth nurses
 - Permits telehealth nurses to practice across state lines
- Call center or telephonic nurses
 - Permits practice across state lines (in participating eNLC states)
- Case managers
- Remote monitoring nurses, either monitoring patients in home or in facilities
- Home health nurses
- Nursing leaders or executives, particularly with responsibilities in multiple sites
 - Enables nurse leaders in multistate organizations to work in multiple states at the same time
- School nurses
- Online nursing faculty
- Consulting nurses
 - Enables consulting nurses in to consult in multiple states at the same time
- Legal nurse consultants
 - Enables legal nurse consultants in to consult in multiple states at the same time
- Military nurses or military spouses

(NCSBN, 2019b; Puente, 2017)

Test Yourself

What types of nurses would benefit from a multistate license?

- a. Travel Nurses
- b. Military Spouse
- c. Home Health Nurses
- d. All of the above**

Rationale: A multistate license provides benefits by allowing the nurse to practice in his or her home state, as well as participating compact states, with one license. This decreases the costs and time associated with obtaining multiple single state licenses in each state of practice. The NLC expands access to nursing care, such as the ability for nurses to provide remote care, like telehealth services. Multistate licensure is also beneficial for nurses who relocate frequently, such as in military families or travel nurses

Participation in the eNLC

Not all states currently participate in the eNLC and multistate licenses can only be used to practice in participating eNLC states. Non-participating states require individual single state licensure. Nurses should always refer to requirements with the state board of nursing where s/he is interested in practicing.

There are now more than 30 states which participate in the eNLC (NCSBN, 2019b). The most current list of states who are participating or preparing to join the eNLC is available through the NCSBN website at <https://www.ncsbn.org/nurse-licensure-compact.htm>

eNLC Uniform Requirements

To apply for multistate licensure, a nurse must first have residence in a state which participates in the eNLC. Additionally, the nurse must meet the eNLC uniform requirements. These include that the nurse:

- Meets the licensure requirements in the home state
- Has graduated from a board-approved education program or has graduated from an approved international education program
- Has passed an English proficiency examination (if applicable)
- Has passed an NCLEX-RN® or NCLEX-PN® examination or predecessor exam
- Is eligible for or holds an active, unencumbered license
- Has submitted to state and federal fingerprint-based criminal background checks

- Has not been convicted or found guilty, or has entered into an agreed disposition, of a felony offense
- Has no misdemeanor convictions related to the practice of nursing
- Is not currently a participant in an alternative program and is required to self-disclose current participation in an alternative program
- Has a valid United States Social Security number

The fees vary for each state, so it is important for the nurse to refer to the requirements of his or her home state (NCSBN, n.d.).

Test Yourself

NLC stands for:

- a. Nurse License Compact
- b. Nursing License Consortium
- c. Nursing Licensure Compact**

Rationale: NLC is the abbreviation for Nursing Licensure Compact. This refers to the model, or compact, where participating states recognize the licensure of another state and allows nurses to practice within participating states. The nurse is still held accountable to practice within the rules and authority of each participating state. A compact nursing license (also known as multistate license) in one state is recognized by other participating NLC states.

Test Yourself

Which of the following is a uniform requirement for the eNLC?

- A. Graduated from an approved education program
- B. Has submitted to state and federal fingerprint-based criminal background checks
- C. Meets the licensure requirements in the home state
- D. All of the above**

Primary State of Residence

Primary state of residence is the state where a nurse lives. It is also known as the “home state”. Proof of primary residence can be accomplished by providing a copy of: state issued identification (e.g. driver’s license), federal income tax returns, or voter registration. You may also be asked to provide additional documents that validate proof of residency such as utility bills. A nurse can only have one state identified as the primary state of legal residence (NCSBN, 2018).

Relocation and Licensure

Primary state of residence must always be declared with licensure. This means that once a nurse becomes a legal resident of a new state, he or she must declare a new primary state of residence and follow requirements for his or her new board of nursing, including proof of residency. **There is no grace period for relocation and change of primary state of residence.** A single state license may be given or the application held until the move occurs, and proof of legal residency is provided. It is the responsibility of each individual nurse to ensure that the correct state of residence is declared in a timely fashion (NCSBN, 2018).

If a nurse who has a multistate license permanently relocates, there are specific considerations for maintaining licensure. If the relocation is to another participating eNLC state, licensure by endorsement to the new state must occur. A multistate license will be issued if the nurse continues to meet eligibility, but the new state is now considered the primary residency once proof of permanent residency is demonstrated.

If the relocation is to a state which does not participate in the eNLC, then the nurse must apply for endorsement, along with proof of residency, and the nurse will be issued a single state license in the new state. The multistate license will no longer be in effect. The previous state's board of nursing must be notified of the change in primary state of residence (NCSBN, 2018).

Test Yourself

I have a multistate license and I am moving to another participating NLC state. I can wait until my license expires to notify the board of nursing of my change of address

- a. Yes
- b. No**

Rationale: Primary state of residence must always be declared with licensure. This means that once a nurse becomes a legal resident of a new state, he or she must declare a new primary state of residence and follow requirements for his or her new board of nursing, including proof of residency. **There is no grace period for relocation and change of primary state of residence.** A single state license may be given or the application held until the move occurs, and proof of legal residency is provided. It is the responsibility of each individual nurse to ensure that the correct state of residence is declared in a timely fashion (NCSBN, 2018).

Verification of Licensure

If a nurse has multiple licenses or multistate privileges through the eNLC, it is easy to verify where he or she can practice. Nursys is a system that can verify and monitor nursing licenses. When searching for a nurse, the list of licensing will be shown. The report will include which licenses are active and if there any disciplinary issues or restrictions. Additionally, it has a link to a visual representation of all states where the nurse can practice. A step by step guide to confirming nursing licensure is available at https://www.ncsbn.org/Authorization_to_Practice_Step_by_step.pdf

Resources

There are multiple resources available for nurses outlining application requirements and also to determine if they are eligible for multistate licensure. Nurses should always refer to their home state board of nursing website. Links to state websites boards of nursing are available on the NCBSN website at www.ncsbn.org

Case Study: Nursing Student

A nursing student, Mary, is about to graduate from a nursing program and take her NCLEX. How will she know if her state is a member of the eNLC?

Answer: She can go to the NCSBN website to check the list of current participating states to see if her state of permanent residency is a member of the eNLC.

Mary determines that her state participates in eNLC. What are the requirements for her to obtain a multistate license?

Answer: She must meet all of the uniform requirements outlined for the eNLC. She must also follow the licensing process of her state and pay the required licensure fees.

Case Study: Telehealth

Susan is a nurse who lives in Florida, and holds an eNLC license with multistate privileges. She provides telehealth nursing services to patients in Georgia, a state which also participates in the eNLC. Which state's rules, regulations, and nurse practice act must she abide by?

Answer: Susan must abide by the rules, regulations and nurse practice act of the state in which she is providing services. If her patients are in Georgia, then she must uphold Georgia's nurse practice act.

Case Study: Moving from one participating state another

A nurse, Paul, obtained a multistate license in Texas (a participating state in eNLC) and moves to Arizona (another participating eNLC state). What must he do for his license?

Answer: He must apply for endorsement to the Arizona board of nursing.

There is no grace period for relocation and change of primary state of residence.

What kind of license will he have with Arizona?

Answer: Arizona is a participating state in the eNLC. If he continues to meet the requirements for a multistate license, it will still be in effect through the state of Arizona.

Case Study: Moving to a Non-participating State

Peggy is a nurse who has an eNLC license in Utah (a participating state) and she moves to Oregon (a non-participating state). What must she do for her license?

Answer: She must apply for endorsement to the Oregon board of nursing. She also must notify the Utah state board of nursing that she has relocated to Oregon as soon as possible.

What kind of license will she have with Oregon?

Answer: Because Oregon does not currently participate in the compact, Peggy will have a single state license in Oregon.

Case Study: Travel Nurse

Robert is a nurse who lives in Hawaii, currently a non-participating state in the eNLC. He wants to become a travel nurse in New Mexico, which is an eNLC participating state. How can he obtain a multistate license?

Answer: He must apply for endorsement to the New Mexico board of nursing. Robert must meet the residency and eligibility requirements first before a multistate license will be issued.

Test Yourself

All states participate in the NLC?

- a. Yes
- b. No**

Rationale: The list of participating states continues to grow. The most current information is found on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing website at <https://www.ncsbn.org/nurse-licensure-compact.htm>.

Frequently Asked Questions

The most current information is found on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing website at <https://www.ncsbn.org/nlc-faqs.htm>

Summary

The processes associated with obtaining nursing licensure are evolving. The enhanced Nursing Licensure Compact (eNLC) provides the ability for nurses to practice in multiple states under one license. This provides a wider range of access to nursing care for patients, as well as flexibility and decreased costs for nurses. To maintain a compact license keep in mind: There is no grace period for relocation and change of primary state of residence;

References:

Maryniak, K. (2017). Maintaining your professional nursing practice. RN.com. Retrieved from <https://lms.rn.com/getpdf.php/2198.pdf>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (n.d.). Uniform licensure requirements for a multistate license. Retrieved from https://www.ncsbn.org/NLC_ULRs.pdf

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2011). What you need to know about nursing licensure and boards of nursing. Retrieved from https://www.ncsbn.org/Nursing_Licensure.pdf

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2018). Moving to another state. Retrieved from https://www.ncsbn.org/2018_Moving_Scenarios_Factsheet.pdf

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2019a). History. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsbn.org/history.htm>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2019b). NLC FAQs. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsbn.org/nlc-faqs.htm>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2019c). Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). Retrieved from <https://www.ncsbn.org/nurse-licensure-compact.htm>

Puente, J. (2017). The enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact. *American Nurse Today*, 12(10), 50-53.

Russell, K. (2017). Nurse practice acts guide and govern: Update 2017. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 8(3), 18-25.