NLC
NURSE LICENSURE COMPACT

Information for New Grads

What is the NLC?

- Currently comprised of 24 member state boards of nursing, the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) allows a nurse (registered nurse [RN] or licensed practical/vocational nurse [LPN/VN]) to possess a multistate license, which permits practice in both their home state and other compact states.
- Unless the nurse is under discipline or restriction, a compact license permits practice (physically and telephonically/electronically) across state lines in all NLC states.

How to Obtain a Compact License

- To be eligible for a multistate license, your primary state of residence (PSOR), also known as your home state, must be an NLC state. This is the state in which you hold a driver's license, are registered to vote and/or file federal income tax.
- Since many students obtain degrees in a state other than their PSOR, it is important to reference the licensure requirements for your home state rather than the state in which you are attending college. Even if both are compact states, requirements may differ.
- If your PSOR is a compact state, by applying for licensure by examination, receiving authorization to test (ATT) in that state, passing the NCLEX and meeting the state licensure requirements, you may be eligible for a multistate license.
- Applying for a compact license does not require completing an additional application for licensure – the license issued by your home state is valid among all 24 compact states. As long as your PSOR does not change, a nurse can practice in all compact states on an active compact license in good standing issued by the home state. **Outside of the compact, you still must apply for a single-state license with the appropriate board of nursing in order to practice in that state.**

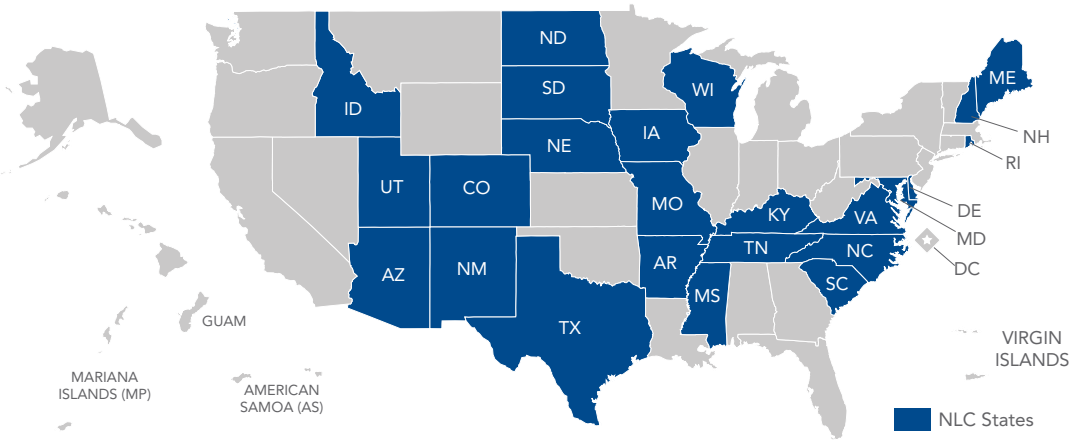
Residents of Noncompact States

- A nurse whose PSOR is a noncompact state is not eligible for a multistate license; when applying for licensure in a compact state, the nurse will be issued a single-state license (valid only in the state of issuance). Compact rules do not apply to a noncompact state resident.

Applying For Licensure Pending a Job Offer

- Initial application for license by exam should be to one state only. If you need additional licenses in noncompact states, after receiving your initial license by exam, you can then apply for licensure by endorsement in another state.
- Some states also offer a temporary license, which can be issued shortly after applying for a license/permit.

www.ncsbn.org/nlc



Applying For Licensure Pending a Job Offer, continued…

- As a resident of a compact state, you may only hold one compact license, but you may hold as many noncompact single-state licenses as needed.
- As a resident of a noncompact state, you may hold as many licenses as needed from any state; all licenses will be single-state licenses.

Common Misconceptions

- As a new grad, you are not required to apply for your initial license by examination in the state where your nursing program is located, unless of course, you plan to live and work in that state. If you will be residing and working in a compact state, then that is the state to apply for licensure by exam and ATT (see example 1). If you will be residing and/or working in a noncompact state, then apply for license by exam and ATT in the state of employment (see example 2).
- After receiving the first license, subsequent licenses in other states are obtained by completing an application for license by endorsement. Often, new grads are taught that this is called "transferring" your license, although the current term is "endorse." The NCLEX® is a national exam, not a state exam, so a candidate can take the exam at any location convenient to them. The results will be sent to the board of nursing where you applied for ATT and initial license by exam.

Examples

1. Mary went to school in New York (a noncompact state), but after graduation will move back to her home of Wisconsin (a compact state), where she will work. Mary should apply for license by exam and ATT with the Wisconsin Board of Nursing. She can take the NCLEX in New York, Wisconsin or anywhere convenient to her. She has no need for a New York license and would not apply for licensure in New York.
2. Jill is in a nursing program in Missouri (a compact state), but after graduation, she will relocate to and start a job in Kansas (a noncompact state). She should apply for license by exam and ATT with the Kansas Board of Nursing. She has no need for a Missouri license and would not apply for licensure in Missouri.
3. John attends school in Missouri (a compact state). Following graduation he will reside in Kansas (a noncompact state), but will work in Missouri. Since he needs privileges to work in Missouri, that is the state where he will apply for license by exam and ATT. Although Missouri is a compact state, he will receive a single state license rather than a compact license because he is a resident of a noncompact state. Since he lives in Kansas, but will not practice there, he has no need to apply for licensure in Kansas.
4. Tom is completing a nursing program in Washington, D.C. After graduation, he'll go back home to Utah. His job involves providing health education over the phone to patients in Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico; therefore he needs practice privileges in all of these states. Since his PSOR is Utah (a compact state) and the states of Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico are also compact states, he only needs his Utah license to practice. He will apply for license by exam and ATT with the Utah Board of Nursing.

Other Important Information

- A nurse must follow the nurse practice act in each state of practice (visit www.ncsbn.org/4319.htm to find your state's nurse practice act). In the case of telephonic or electronic practice, the state of practice is the state where the patient is located at the time practice occurs.
- For requirements when moving, see the fact sheet "What Nurses Need to Know," which is available at www.ncsbn.org/nlc.htm.

Helpful Links

Licensure by Examination:
www.ncsbn.org/NCLEX_Flowchart.pdf

Licensure by Endorsement:
www.ncsbn.org/Endorsement_Flowchart.pdf

NLC Contact:
NurseCompact@ncsbn.org

NCLEX® Contacts:
www.ncsbn.org/1206.htm

NLC Explained Video:
www.ncsbn.org/3501.htm