



August 2011

## Fact Sheet: Licensure of Nurses and State Boards of Nursing

### Licensure

1. Assures the public that those calling themselves a nurse are nurses and have met regulatory standards specific to the nursing profession.
2. Consists of several important components:
  - a. Education: The nurse has completed the nursing education requirements at a state-approved program that has met state regulations.
  - b. Examination: The nurse has passed a national, psychometrically sound examination.
  - c. Other state requirements: The nurse has met additional state requirements, such as state and federal criminal background checks.
4. Holds nurses who violate the state nurse practice act and standards of practice accountable for their actions.
5. Ensures that foreign educated nurses have met U.S. standards.

### Boards of Nursing

1. Uphold the state nurse practice act to safeguard the public.
2. Bring quality and expertise to the regulatory arena, which are integral to making determinations about licensure, practice and discipline.
3. Safeguard the public by ensuring that anyone that is licensed to practice nursing has met a minimum level of competency.
4. Sets standards for nursing education programs ensuring that the curriculum meets national standards, that students have proper clinical experiences and faculty are qualified to teach.
5. Monitor NCLEX® scores and approve nursing education programs on an ongoing basis to ensure all regulatory standards are met.
6. Ensure that nursing education transcripts are authentic. Identify and prevent nurse imposters from practicing and share this information with other state boards of nursing.
7. Conduct investigations, enforce the state nurse practice act and take action on individuals violating state laws/regulations, including monitoring nurses affected by a substance use disorder.
8. Monitor criminal background check information and any other state regulations required for licensure.
9. Participate in state policy decisions related to nursing care and education.

©2011 The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is a not-for-profit organization whose members include the boards of nursing in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories — American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands. There are also seven associate members.

*Mission: NCSBN provides education, service and research through collaborative leadership to promote evidence-based regulatory excellence for patient safety and public protection.*



111 E. Wacker Drive, Ste. 2900  
Chicago, IL 60601

Main 312.525.3600  
Fax 312.279.1032  
www.ncsbn.org