



NCSBN

*National Council of State Boards of Nursing*



# PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

2011 EDITION





WHAT POLICYMAKERS AND THE PUBLIC  
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NCSBN



The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN®) is a not-for-profit organization whose membership comprises 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 international associate members.

Founded in 1978 as an independent, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, NCSBN can trace its roots to the American Nurses Association (ANA) Council on State Boards of Nursing. The impetus for its creation arose out of recognition that in order to guard the safety of the public, the regulation of nurses needed to be a separate entity from the organization representing professional nurses.

The member boards that comprise NCSBN protect the public by ensuring that safe and competent care is provided by licensed nurses. In some states, boards of nursing also regulate related professions. NCSBN is the vehicle through which boards of nursing act and counsel together on matters of common interest. These member boards are charged with the responsibility of providing regulatory excellence for public health, safety and welfare. They recognize that the best way to guard the safety of the public is to ensure that nurses entering the workforce have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice. To meet that goal, one of NCSBN's major focuses is devoted to developing a psychometrically sound and legally defensible nurse licensure



examination consistent with current nursing practice. The NCLEX-RN® and NCLEX-PN® Examinations developed and administered by NCSBN are constantly and rigorously evaluated to keep pace with the rapidly evolving health care environment.

As the collective voice of nursing regulation in the U.S. and its territories, NCSBN serves its member boards by conducting research on nursing practice issues, monitoring trends in public policy, nursing practice and education, while providing opportunities for collaboration among its members and other international, federal, state and local nursing and health care organizations. NCSBN maintains the Nursys® database, which coordinates national, publicly available nurse licensure information and serves as a clearinghouse of nurse licensure data for member board use.



## THE ROLE OF BOARDS OF NURSING

FOUR



Boards of nursing protect the public by:

- Carrying out requirements of its state or territorial nurse practice act (NPA) or laws governing nursing;
- Setting nurse license requirements for safe nurse practice;
- Setting safe and competent practice requirements for other professions/occupations that boards of nursing may regulate;
- Issuing nurse licenses to appropriately prepared individuals;
- Determining violations of the NPA for potential disciplinary action against a nurse's license;
- Protecting the public by taking action, if needed, against the license of a nurse who is found guilty of violating the NPA;
- Regulating nursing education in many states or territories; and
- Receiving and investigating complaints from the public (employers, patients and family members) on possible violations of the NPA that include incompetent or inappropriate nursing care.



PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA





NCSBN recognizes that public policy through effective legislation and regulation at all levels of government is paramount to achieving its mission. Based on this mission and the role of boards of nursing in regulating licensure, education and practice, NCSBN has formally composed a public policy agenda for 2011–2013.

Under each of the following categories of regulation, NCSBN has developed specific policy statements that support our mission, the work of the U.S. boards of nursing, major NCSBN initiatives and the resolutions of our Delegate Assembly.

## L I C E N S U R E

NCSBN:

- Supports state-based licensure and the power granted to the states by the U.S. Constitution to formulate their own state laws and rules related to health care regulation. NCSBN opposes federal preemption of state laws related to nursing regulation.
- Believes that criminal background checks are essential for safe licensure of nurses and urges legislation pertaining to the enactment of criminal background checks. NCSBN provides a variety of resources for boards of nursing initiating this process and lends support for legislation related to criminal background checks.



- Promotes uniformity and the adoption of NCSBN uniform licensure requirements for registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical/vocational nurses (LPN/VNs). Uniform licensure requirements across all states will increase the mobility of nurses, facilitate telehealth and improve access to care. In addition, it assures the public that every nurse in the U.S. and its territories has met the same requirements.
- Supports the development of a comprehensive national workforce database to provide an unduplicated count of nurses licensed in the U.S.

## PRACTICE

NCSBN supports all new state legislation that complies with the Consensus Model for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) Regulation (APRN Consensus Model). Adoption of the recommendations in the APRN Consensus Model by all states is a major initiative of NCSBN. These national standards will increase mobility of APRNs, increase access to care, help fill gaps in areas that need health care providers and assure the public that every APRN has met the same standards to practice.

## EDUCATION

NCSBN:

- Encourages innovation in nursing education by supporting new models for nursing education that introduce new and creative ways of teaching in the 21st century.

- Supports federal and state initiatives that encourage nurses with advanced degrees to acquire faculty positions and assist nursing education program expansion.

## WORKFORCE

### NCSBN:

- Supports nursing workforce data collection. This will provide an extraordinary wealth of information that can be used at the federal, state and local levels for predicting and solving nursing shortages.
- Advocates for the ethical recruitment of international nurses. NCSBN supports qualified foreign nurses who wish to practice in the U.S. and encourages the federal government to monitor recruitment practices.

## ADDITIONAL ISSUES

### NCSBN also:

- Supports new nursing initiatives that are related to the recommendations outlined in the Robert Wood Johnson and Institute of Medicine report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, which includes encouraging the pursuit of higher education and expansion of scope of practice for LPN/VNs, RNs and APRNs.
- Promotes the participation of boards of nursing in state-based patient safety initiatives.

- Supports the use of evidence-based regulatory interventions for licensees with substance use disorders.
- Encourages local, state and the federal government to include nurse regulators in health policy discussions. NCSBN recommends inclusion of nurse regulators at tables where discussions are focused on health care education, practice and delivery. An example would be including a nurse regulator in Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)'s National Advisory Council on Nursing Education and Practice (NACNEP), since discussions are related to workforce, education and practice, which are components of regulation.
- Supports both the umbrella and independent structures for boards of nursing, however, NCSBN believes that independent boards of nursing should be able to maintain their autonomy from other agencies, unless the board of nursing requests consolidation.
- Encourages legislators to use evidence in the formation of public policy related to nursing regulation. This will promote sound policies in the interest of public protection.



RESOURCES



NCSBN welcomes communication with policymakers. NCSBN staff is available to answer questions or provide assistance to any policymaker that is interested in learning more about nursing regulation and/or any of the organization's initiatives.

Visit the NCSBN website at [www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org) for the following resources:

- Key policy and position statements;
- General nursing regulation information;
- Links to boards of nursing websites;
- Access to NCSBN Member Board Profiles, which contain information about nursing regulation in member board jurisdictions; and
- NCLEX® examination statistics.

For additional information, contact [policyandgovernmentrelations@ncsbn.org](mailto:policyandgovernmentrelations@ncsbn.org) or call 312.525.3365.



# NCSBN

*National Council of State Boards of Nursing*

111 East Wacker Drive  
Suite 2900  
Chicago, Illinois 60601-4277  
312.525.3600 Phone  
312.279.1032 Fax  
[www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org)

Revised 4/11

