



Information for New Nurse Graduates

What is the NLC?

- The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) allows a registered nurse (RN) or licensed practical/vocational nurse (LPN/VN) to possess a multistate license, which permits practice in both the home state and other compact states, while maintaining a primary state of residence (PSOR).
- Unless the nurse is under discipline or restriction, a multistate 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 and are registered to vote.
- If your PSOR is a compact state, you may be eligible for a multistate license by applying for licensure by examination, receiving authorization to test (ATT) in that state, passing the NCLEX® and meeting all multistate licensure requirements.
- A multistate license issued by your home state is valid in all 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. To practice in noncompact states, you must apply for a single-state license with the appropriate board of nursing.

Residents of Noncompact States

A nurse whose PSOR is a noncompact state is not eligible for a multistate license. When a resident of a noncompact state applies 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

A new graduate may only submit application for license by exam to one state. For more information regarding license by examination, view the License by Exam Flowchart on the NLC Toolkit webpage at www.ncsbn.org/nlc-toolkit.htm. If additional licenses are needed 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 application submission. Temporary licenses are single state.
- As a resident of a compact state, a nurse may hold one multistate license, but may hold as many noncompact single-state licenses as needed.
- As a resident of a noncompact state, a nurse may hold as many licenses as needed from any state; all licenses will be single-state licenses.

Common Misconceptions

- As a new graduate, you are not required to apply for your initial license by examination in the state where your nursing program is located, unless 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 in which to apply for licensure by exam and ATT (see example 1 on back). 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. This is often referred to as "transferring" your license. The NCLEX is a national exam and 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.



Unlocking Access to Nursing Care Across the Nation

Examples

1. Mary went to school in New York (a noncompact state), but after graduation will move back to her home of Texas (a compact state), where she will work. Mary should apply for license by exam and ATT with the Texas Board of Nursing. She can take the NCLEX in New York or any other state 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 California (a noncompact state). She should apply for license by exam and ATT with the California Board of Registered Nursing. She has no need for a Missouri license and would not apply for licensure in Missouri.
3. John attends school in Maryland (a compact state). Following graduation he will reside in Pennsylvania (a noncompact state), but will work in Maryland. Since he needs privileges to work in Maryland, that is the state where he will apply for license by exam and ATT. Although Maryland 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 Pennsylvania, but will not practice there, he has no need to apply for licensure in Pennsylvania.
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, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico; therefore he needs practice privileges in all of these states. Since his PSOR is Utah (a compact state) and Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico are all compact states, he only needs his Utah multistate license to practice. He will apply for license by exam and ATT with the Utah State Board of Nursing.



Other Important Information

A nurse must adhere to the nurse practice act in each state of practice (visit www.ncsbn.org/npa.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 moving scenarios, see the fact sheet on the NLC Toolkit webpage at www.ncsbn.org/nlc-toolkit.htm.

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For more information about the enhanced NLC, visit nursecompact.com.

If you have a specific question, contact nursecompact@ncsbn.org.

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