

# The Nurse Licensure Compact – a Primer

The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) is an interstate occupational license agreement for registered nurses (RN) and licensed practical nurse/vocational nurse (LPN/VN). Licensed RNs and LPN/VNs living in a member state (home state) can practice in other member states (remote state) without obtaining a license in the remote state. The compact agreement is administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). As of January 2020, the NLC has been implemented in 32 states, two states have enacted legislation and are awaiting implementation. NLC legislation is pending in seven additional states and Guam (NCSBN, 2020). Oregon has not joined the NLC.

The NCSBN states the NLC has benefits for the nursing profession by increasing the supply of nurses and decreasing the costs of licensure (NCSBN, Fact Sheet). These benefits include:

- Enables RNs and LPNs to practice in other member state without having to obtain additional licenses.
- Enables RNs and LPNs to provide telehealth services to patients in other member states without additional licensure requirements.
- Allows RNs and LPNs to quickly move across state borders and provide services in the event of the disaster.
- Facilitates telenursing and online nursing education.
- Is cost effective for nurses and those employers whose organizations pay licensing fees for RNs and LPNs in their employ, as nurses and employers do not have to pay for additional licenses if RNs and LPNs practice in another member state.

According to NCSBN, the NLC implemented several safeguards to ensure patient safety. These safeguards include:

- All current safeguards built into the current licensing process are required before a multistate license is issued.
- The NLC has uniform licensure requirements so all nurses issued the multistate license have met the same minimum requirements regardless of the home state in which they are licensed.
- Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the nurses' home state board of nursing.

For a state to join the NLC, state legislatures must pass NCSBN's model act and the state's board of nursing (BON) must promulgate NCSBN's model rules. NCSBN's model act is available at [https://www.ncsbn.org/14\\_Model\\_Act\\_0914.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/14_Model_Act_0914.pdf) and the model rules are available at [https://www.ncsbn.org/17\\_Model\\_Rules\\_0917.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/17_Model_Rules_0917.pdf).

States that choose to join the enhanced NLC gain the additional benefit of a nationwide notification system. The Nursys e-Notify system is a real-time notification system about changes to a nurse's licensing status, including expirations, renewals, and disciplinary actions. Nursys e-Notify is available to all boards of nursing in compact member states (NCSBN, e-Notify Fact Sheet).

Oregon's inclusion in the NLC has been a topic of conversation at the Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) over several years. The OSBN Board has not made a formal recommendation to explore the NLC in Oregon, and has included an update about the national status of the NLC as part of the Practice and Evaluation Environmental Scan report during every OSBN public meeting since at least May 2019.

In Oregon, the main arguments for why the NLC should not be adopted are:

- Not all states have the same requirements for nurses in terms of education standards or criminal background checks. Adopting the NLC might mean lowering Oregon's standards.
- Disciplinary actions are hard to track. It is possible for a nurse to commit a disciplinary offense in Oregon that is not considered a disciplinary offense in their home state.
- The NLC could allow employers to move nurses into the state to respond to a labor dispute.
- NLC states do not have accurate counts of the supply of nurses practicing in their state since NLC-licensed nurses are only counted in their home state.

## References

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