

Professional Licensing Agency
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TO: Governor's Health Workforce Council

FROM: Deborah J. Frye, PLA Executive Director

RE: Update on the Implementation of the Nurse Licensure Compact in Indiana

The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) is an interstate compact administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) which allows for both Registered Nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) to have a single multistate license, which grants them the privilege to practice in their home state and other NLC states. The compact itself first became effective on Jan. 1, 2000 and has steadily grown as each individual state has passed legislation which authorizes their respective licensing board to accept NLC multistate licenses, allow nurses in their state to apply for a multistate license, and interface with NLC with regards to disciplinary measures for compact nurses. There are currently [34 states](#) which have fully implemented the NLC across the nation and accept the compact's multistate license.

BACKGROUND:

HEA 1344-2019 was legislation which officially authorized our Indiana State Board of Nursing (ISBN) to enroll in the NLC and begin working with the Commission. While the State of Indiana first entered the compact on July 1, 2019; implementation of the compact was not complete until July 1, 2020. This allowed time for the ISBN to complete the needed administrative work required to connect to any national compact, such as syncing the national Nursys database with Indiana's licensure database, determining how disciplinary action would be resolved in tandem with the Office of the Indiana Attorney General, and public outreach to ensure that nurses, employers, and patients across the state were aware and understood the coming changes. The NLC Commission, as a robust compact organization with decades of experience, were able to offer the ISBN a grant to cover these administrative costs, including the technical costs which represent the largest expenditure for any compact connection in Indiana.

The compact allows two important things for nurses in Indiana: 1) Authorize nurses who live in Indiana to attain a multistate license which allows them to practice in other NLC eligible states; and 2) Recognize multistate licenses issued by other NLC eligible states, allowing all nurses who obtain this privilege to work in Indiana. While the process is simple for nurses who have an existing multistate license and come to Indiana, individuals seeking a multistate license must meet the following requirements:

- **Existing Licensure:** An individual seeking a multistate license must have an existing RN or LPN license in their state of primary residence. The requirements for that single-state license reflect the existing statutory and administrative requirements of that state to ensure that the compact does not infringe on a state's ability to enforce their own licensure standards. Additionally, they must report if any state has ever taken an adverse action against their license.
- **Application Fee of \$25.00:** All applicants are required to pay the standard fee set by the compact.
- **Criminal Background Check:** All applicants for a multistate license must undergo a criminal background check as part of their application. This is to ensure that the compact's national safety

standards are met and serves as a secondary measure to ensure nurses are reporting all adverse events.

- **Proof of Primary State of Residence:** Each nurse who holds a multistate license is required to have a Primary State of Residence where their underlying license exists. This is to ensure that the nurse is maintaining any appropriate continuing education or licensure standards required by their home state and acts as an avenue for discipline if required.

Any nurse who is using a multistate license to work remotely is required to be knowledgeable of and conform to all required laws of the state they are practicing in including, scope of practice guidelines, standard of care regulations, and other statutes. A nurse utilizing a multistate license may be disciplined by the Board of Nursing in any state they are practicing and in their primary state of residence, safeguarding the ability for states to have control over the practitioners acting within their state.

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE:

Since the NLC became active for nurses in Indiana on July 1, 2020; we have seen substantial growth and adoption of the multistate license by Hoosier Nurses. Below are the number of Hoosier nurses who have utilized their existing licensure in Indiana to attain multistate licensure under the NLC:

- Registered Nurses: Multistate License- 8,795
- Licensed Practical Nurses: Multistate License- 1,083

The impact of COVID-19 on the adoption rates of the multistate license by Hoosier nurses is still being understood by the Indiana State Board of Nursing and their fellow stakeholders in the field. Many nurses were focused on their frontline work in their existing positions and caring for all Hoosiers impacted by the pandemic and have, as of yet, not gone through the process of attaining a multistate license. However, other nurses were able to utilize their new multistate license to increase their area of care either by working across state lines in other NLC eligible states, such as in the Louisville metro area, or by utilizing their license to be travel nurses across the country and responding to shortage areas.

At the time of implementation in July 1, 2020; one challenge the ISBN encountered was a bottleneck in the ability of applicants to attain fingerprinting services in a timely manner. Many of the locations where Hoosiers are able to be fingerprinted were closed to the public or severely limiting the amount processed per day, in addition to administrative delays by these vendors in processing the criminal background check. This delay was felt across numerous fields, however as more facilities have reopened and returned to normal operations, the delay that applicants may have encountered has also largely dissipated.

SUMMARY:

The primary goals of the implementation of the NLC in Indiana has been to allow the citizens of Indiana increased access to care and improve the portability of nursing licenses, while at the same time maintaining public protection for medical professionals at the state level. As we worked with NLC on the rollout of the compact, one of the benefits often discussed was the ability for nurses to better respond to disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes. While a pandemic may not have been on our minds at the time, the flexibility offered by the NLC has undoubtedly increased healthcare access as the nation's healthcare system has worked its way through this past year. With nearly 10,000 Hoosier nurses eligible to work across the nation and the flexibility of nurses with multistate licenses to bolster our response, the State of Indiana has been able to capitalize on the NLC even with implementation during uncertain times.