

Q I live in a noncompact state. How do I get a compact multistate license?

Only nurses who declare a compact state as their primary state of residence are eligible for a multistate license. As a resident of a noncompact state, you may apply for a license in a compact state, although your eligibility will be limited to a single state license that is valid in that state only.

Q Where is the compact application and what is the application fee?

There is no separate compact application. Use the state board of nursing application for licensure by exam or by endorsement, as found on your board of nursing's website. Licensure fees vary by state.

Q I live in a compact state and have a license. How do I get a compact license?

If you declare a compact state as your primary state of residence, your license automatically becomes a compact (multistate) license, as long as it is in good standing. If you're unsure of your licensure status, use the QuickConfirm tool at www.nursys.com. This report will indicate "multistate" or "single state" in the status column.

Q I have a compact license. How long can I work in another compact state?

There is no time limit. As long as your home state is a compact state and is declared as your primary state of residency, and you remain in good standing, you may practice in other compact states.

Q What if I move to another compact state?

When permanently relocating to another compact state, apply for licensure by endorsement and complete the Declaration of Primary State of Residence for the new home state, which can be found on your board of nursing's website. The declaration form is generally a page within the application. Notify the former compact board of nursing that you are no longer a resident. You can practice on your former license for a period of up to 90 days. The 90-day period starts when you become a resident in the new state.

Please note: States are in the process of amending rules regarding the period of time a nurse can practice on the license issued by a former state of residence. The number of days is based on the rule in effect in the new state. It's recommended to start the application process prior to the move. Visit www.ncsbn.org/nlc to confirm your state's current status. It's recommended that you start the application process prior to the move.

Q My primary state of residence is a noncompact state; it is also where I am licensed. I am applying for licensure in a compact state. Do I have to give up my current license?

No, you may maintain your current license. Residents of noncompact states are not bound by compact rules, which permit a licensee to hold only one compact multistate license in the primary state of residence.

Q I live in a compact state where I am licensed. How do I get a license in a noncompact state?

Apply for licensure by endorsement to the board of nursing in the state where you seek a license. Applications can be found on that board of nursing's website.

Q I am graduating from a nursing program. Can I take the NCLEX® in a different state?

The NCLEX® can be taken in any state convenient to you. The results will be directed to the board of nursing where you applied for your authorization to test (ATT) and licensure. You should apply for a license in the state where you intend to legally reside and/or practice.

Q I live in a noncompact state, but I will be changing my primary state of residence to a compact state in a few months for a job. Can I apply for a license in that state now so I can work immediately after moving?

Yes. It's recommended you start the application process prior to the move. A new compact license will not be issued until you provide a Declaration of Primary State of Residence form and any proof of residence that may be required by the board of nursing. Some states offer a temporary license; this may enable you to practice while your application is being processed.

Q I live in a noncompact state, but own property in a compact state. Can I get a compact license?

In order to be eligible for a compact license, your declared primary state of residence must be a compact state. Owning property in a compact state is not sufficient to meet residence requirements. Proof of residence includes obtaining a driver's license, voting/registering to vote or filing federal taxes with an address in that state.

Q I have a compact license and have accepted a temporary assignment in another compact state. My employer is telling me that I need to get that state's license. Is this true?

When hired in a remote state for a temporary position or commuting to a remote state from the primary state of residence (usually an adjacent state), employers cannot require you to apply for licensure in the remote state when you have lawfully declared another state as your primary state of residence. Primary state of residence is based on where you pay federal income tax, vote and/or hold a driver's license. The remote board of nursing cannot issue a license to a nurse who has declared another compact state as the primary state of residence, since the compact license from the home state applies to both states and having multiple compact licenses is therefore redundant. You have the privilege to practice in any remote compact state with your home state compact license.

A legal memo on this topic is available at https://www.ncsbn.org/NLCA_Legal_Memo2Employers.pdf and provides additional information for employers.