

The 2011 Uniform Licensure Requirements for Adoption

Brenda McDougal, Chair; and members Karla Bitz, PhD, RN, FRE; Sue Derouen, RN, BSN; Judith Nagel, MS, RN; Katherine Thomas, MN, RN; Barbara Newman, MS, RN; Heidi Goodman, RN; and Jennifer L. Filippone; for the Uniform Licensure Requirements and Portability Committee

In 1999, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) undertook a major initiative to develop minimal licensure requirements and, upon recommendation by an appointed committee and approval of the NCSBN Board of Directors, the 1999 Uniform Licensure Requirements (ULRs) were adopted by the Delegate Assembly. Enactment of these requirements by individual boards of nursing (BONs), however, varied to wide degrees and as a result many variances emerged and uniformity was not achieved. During the 10 years that followed, both intrinsic and extrinsic environmental factors affected the nursing profession and impacted health care delivery, causing major stakeholders to request uniformity among state nursing laws and regulations, especially in regard to licensure. In August 2011, NCSBN's Delegate Assembly adopted the 2011 ULRs to serve as new national standards for registered nurse and licensed practical/vocational nurse licensure across all states and territories. States are urged to adopt the new 2011 ULRs included in this article. Once adopted, they will establish uniformity across all U.S. jurisdictions and ease the portability of nurses in the United States.

In August 2011, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing's (NCSBN) Delegate Assembly (representing boards of nursing [BONs] across all U.S. jurisdictions) ceremoniously adopted the 2011 Uniform Licensure Requirements (ULRs) to serve as standards for registered nurse (RN) and licensed practical/vocational nurse (LPN/VN) licensure across all states and territories. States are urged to adopt the ULRs to make initial, renewal, endorsement and reinstatement licensure requirements consistent across all U.S. jurisdictions.

The 2011 ULRs will set new national standards for licensure and if adopted by BONs will bring uniformity across all jurisdictions. Adoption of the new ULRs will also demonstrate to external stakeholders, the federal government, and consumers that BONs are interested in establishing uniformity and easing the portability of nurses in the United States. The revised ULRs utilized extensive feedback from the membership and are based on available evidence.

Background

In 1999, NCSBN undertook a major initiative to develop minimal licensure requirements. The goal was to set minimal standards, as well as provide a uniform set of requirements for adoption across all jurisdictions. Upon recommendation by an appointed committee and approval of the NCSBN Board of Directors, the 1999 ULRs were adopted by the Delegate Assembly. Enactment by individual BONs, however, varied to wide degrees. As defined by the 1999 committee, the ULRs were

minimal requirements for BONs. This gave BONs the flexibility to adopt the requirements in many ways, often adding further requirements if their state chose to do so. As a result, many variances emerged, and uniformity was not achieved.

During the 10 years that followed, both intrinsic and extrinsic environmental factors affected the nursing profession. Workforce shortages, a technological boon that rapidly advanced the capabilities of telehealth and globalization, among other factors, have impacted health care delivery and have stakeholders requesting uniformity among state nursing laws and regulations, especially in regard to licensure. During the 2008 Delegate Assembly, a resolution was passed requesting that the ULRs be reviewed and updated. In response, a new Uniform Licensure Requirements and Portability Committee was established.

The committee used a variety of resources in its deliberations. It consulted a variety of experts in the areas of law, education, and forensic and police psychology, thoroughly examined current state licensure requirements, surveyed the state BONs, and incorporated as much of NCSBN's membership feedback into the development of the ULRs as possible.

The following table outlines the board's and nurse applicant's responsibilities for the various phases of the licensure process.

TABLE 1

2011 Uniform Licensure Requirements for RN and LPN/VN Licensure

A. Initial Licensure

	Applicant Responsibility	Board Responsibility
1A. Nursing Education Requirements: RN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation or eligibility for graduation from a Member Board–approved RN prelicensure program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of graduation or eligibility for graduation from a Member Board–approved prelicensure RN program.
2A. Nursing Education Requirements: LPN/VN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation or eligibility for graduation from a Member Board–approved LPN/VN prelicensure program. • Graduates from RN prelicensure programs who wish to take the NCLEX-PN® must have successfully completed a Member Board–approved LPN/VN role delineation course. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of graduation or eligibility for graduation from a Member Board–approved LPN/VN prelicensure program.
3A. Nursing Education Requirements of International Candidates: RN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation from a nursing program comparable to a Member Board–approved RN prelicensure program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification by a credentials review agency of graduation from a nursing program comparable to a Member Board–approved RN prelicensure program. • Graduation from a nursing program comparable to a Member Board–approved RN program. This program should be approved by an accrediting body or other authority whose role it is to approve nursing programs in that country.
4A. Nursing Education Requirements of International Candidates: LPN/VN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation from a nursing program comparable to a Member Board–approved prelicensure LPN/VN program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification by a credentials review agency of graduation from a nursing program comparable to a Member Board–approved prelicensure LPN/VN program. • Graduation from a nursing program comparable to a Member Board–approved LPN/VN program. This program should be approved by an accrediting body or other authority whose role it is to approve nursing programs in that country.
5A. NCLEX Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful completion of the NCLEX-RN® or NCLEX-PN. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification that applicant successfully completed the NCLEX-RN or NCLEX-PN.
6A. Additional Requirements for International Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-disclosure of nursing licensure status in country of origin, if applicable. • Successful passage of an English proficiency exam that includes the components of reading, speaking, writing, and listening, except for applicants from countries where English is the native language, and the nursing program where the applicant attended was taught in English and used English textbooks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of nursing licensure status and/or authorization to practice if applicable in country of origin. • Verification of successful passage of an English proficiency exam that includes the components of reading, speaking, writing, and listening, except for applicants from countries where English is the native language, and the nursing program where the applicant attended was taught in English and used English textbooks.
7A. Additional Public Protection Requirements: Criminal Background Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-disclosure of all misdemeanors, felonies, and plea agreements (even if adjudication was withheld). • Submit state and federal fingerprint checks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of all misdemeanors, felonies, and plea agreements (even if adjudication was withheld) of all individuals applying for licensure on a case-by-case basis to determine board action. • Require psychological evaluation for all individuals convicted of a sexual offense involving a minor or performing a sexual act against the will of another person. This evaluation should be performed by a qualified expert approved by the board. If the evaluation identifies sexual behaviors of a predatory nature, the board of nursing (BON) should deny licensure.

	Applicant Responsibility	Board Responsibility
8A. Additional Public Protection Requirements: Substance Use Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any substance use disorder in the last 5 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require a substance use disorder evaluation to verify the applicant is capable of practicing nursing safely.
9A. Additional Public Protection Requirements: Other Licenses, Certifications, Registrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any actions taken or initiated against a professional or occupational license, registration, or certification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of any actions taken or initiated against a professional or occupational license, registration, or certification and consideration of the individual's ability to practice nursing safely.
B. Renewal/Reinstatement Requirements		
	Applicant Responsibility	Board Responsibility
1B. Criminal Background Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of all misdemeanors, felonies, and plea agreements (even if adjudication was withheld) not previously reported to the board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of all misdemeanors, felonies, and plea agreements (even if adjudication was withheld) not previously reported to the board for determination of eligibility for renewal or reinstatement of licensure. State and federal fingerprint checks using automatic criminal background feedback system (such as Rap-Back). Require psychological evaluation for all individuals convicted of a sexual offense involving a minor or performing a sexual act against the will of another person. This evaluation should be performed by a qualified expert approved by the board. If the evaluation identifies sexual behaviors of a predatory nature, the BON should deny licensure. Examine all other cases on an individual basis.
2B. Substance Use Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any substance use disorder since last renewal. Self-disclosure of current participation in an alternative-to-discipline program in any jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request a substance use disorder evaluation to verify the applicant is capable of practicing nursing safely.
3B. Nursing Disciplinary Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any Member Board action taken on a nursing license or current/pending investigation by a Member Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of any Member Board action taken on a nursing license or current/pending investigation by a Member Board. Check Nursys for discipline in other jurisdictions.
4B. Other Licenses, Certifications, Registrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any actions taken or initiated against a professional or occupational license, registration, or certification not previously reported to the board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of any actions taken or initiated against a professional or occupational license, registration, or certification not previously reported to the board and consideration of the individual's ability to practice nursing safely.
C. Endorsement Requirements		
	Applicant Responsibility	Board Responsibility
1C. Education, Exam, and Licensure Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a Member Board–approved RN or LPN/VN prelicensure education program. Successful passage of the NCLEX/State Board Test Pool Exam. Self-disclosure of status of all nursing licenses (includes any board actions taken or any current or pending investigations by a Member Board) . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verification of education. Verification of successful passage of the NCLEX/State Board Test Pool Exam. Verification of all nursing licenses.

	Applicant Responsibility	Board Responsibility
2C. Criminal Background Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of all misdemeanors, felonies, and plea agreements (even if adjudication was withheld). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of all misdemeanors, felonies, and plea agreements (even if adjudication was withheld) of all individuals applying for licensure. State and federal fingerprint checks. Require psychological evaluation for all individuals convicted of a sexual offense involving a minor or performing a sexual act against the will of another person. This evaluation should be performed by a qualified expert approved by the board. If the evaluation identifies sexual behaviors of a predatory nature, the BON should deny licensure. All other convictions should be determined on a case-by-case basis.
3C. Substance Use Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any substance use disorder in the last 5 years. Self-disclosure of current participation in an alternative-to-discipline program in any jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request a substance use disorder evaluation to verify the applicant is capable of practicing nursing safely.
4C. Other Licenses, Certifications, Registrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-disclosure of any actions taken or initiated against a professional or occupational license, registration, or certification not previously reported to the board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of any actions taken or initiated against a professional or occupational license, registration, or certification and consideration of the individual's ability to practice nursing safely.
<p>*Member Board–approved also applies to states in which the nursing program approval is done through another state agency such as the Commission on Higher Learning.</p> <p><i>Administrative code regulations, such as child support, payment of taxes, school loans, and so forth, are not included in these licensure requirements as these are state specific and do not solely apply to the board of nursing.</i></p>		

Selected References

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the Kentucky BON; **Judith Nagel, MS, RN**, Associate Director of the Idaho BON; **Katherine Thomas, MN, RN**, Executive Director of the Texas BON; **Barbara Newman, MS, RN**, Member Board Staff of the Maryland BON; **Heidi Goodman, RN**, Assistant Executive Officer of the California Board of Registered Nurses; and **Jennifer L. Filippone**, Chief, Practitioner Licensing and Investigation Section of the Connecticut Board of Examiners for Nursing.

Brenda McDougal was chairman of the Uniform Licensure Requirements and Portability Committee and is Associate Executive Director for the North Carolina Board of Nursing (BON). The other committee members were **Karla Bitz, PhD, RN, FRE**, Associate Director of the North Dakota BON; **Sue Derouen, RN, BSN**, Operations Manager for