

MICHIGAN NURSE LICENSING GUIDE FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

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1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN

OVERVIEW

This guide looks at things that you as a foreign-educated nurse must do to become eligible for nurse licensing in Michigan. At the same time, it includes some background and tips on the larger nurse profession to give you an idea of the variety of opportunities available as you work to rebuild your career.

REGULATION OF THE NURSING PROFESSION

Nursing in Michigan is regulated by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) on behalf of the Michigan Board of Nursing. LARA issues 2 types of nursing licenses. You must be licensed to practice as a RN or LPN in Michigan.

- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
- Registered Professional Nurse (RN)

The guide assumes that you hold the equivalent of a U.S. degree in Nursing, so the most appropriate license type for you is a Registered Nurse (RN) or a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). It also assumes that your Michigan license will be your first U.S. nursing license. You will become an RN or LPN through Licensure by Examination. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) administers the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), which is required for licensing as an RN or LPN in Michigan.

NURSES AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

In the U.S., the terms RN and LPN includes professionals with a variety of education levels but with certain skill sets in common. Most people become RNs and LPNs after participating in one of two types of educational programs:

- An LPN Certificate in Nursing (2 years of study, typically in a community college)
- An Associate's Degree of Nursing or ADN (2 years of study, typically in a community college)
- A Bachelor of Science in Nursing or BSN (a 4-year university degree)

Usually, a higher level of education corresponds to greater responsibility, specialization, and advancement opportunities in the workplace. Many RNs later go on to receive masters or doctoral degrees in nursing and pursue careers as APRNs or in healthcare management, consulting, research, or education roles. Many LPNs later go on to further their education and become RNs.

2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

OVERVIEW

Internationally Educated Nurses need to meet several requirements to receive Licensure by Examination as an RN or LPN in Michigan.

I (A). EVALUATE YOUR FOREIGN DEGREE AND FOREIGN LICENSE WITH CGFNS-RN LICENSEES

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) instructs you on the steps necessary to certify your foreign degree and licensure. Here are the steps:

- Apply for a CGFNS Certification Program by registering online
- Make sure that you ask for your report to be prepared for the Michigan Board of Nursing - this will make your record available to the State electronically
- Provide the required documents for review
- Provide translations for any documents not in English. This is most often done through your foreign school(s) or licensing agency. You will need to research how to do this and what you will be charged by these institutions

- Once your documents have been reviewed and approved you may schedule your CGFNS qualifying exam date, this exam is offered four times a year, you will be provided two test windows of five days each to choose from.
- Once you receive your certification it never expires and is good for 2 years.

CGFNS will evaluate your education and licensing, as well as your Qualifying Exam scores, to see if it is comparable to the minimum standards for a Michigan Registered Nurse program. This includes standards for coursework and clinical experience in five areas of nursing practice:

- Adult medical nursing
- Adult surgical nursing
- Obstetrics (maternal and infant health)
- Pediatrics (care of children)
- Psychiatric or mental health nursing

I (V). EVALUATE YOUR FOREIGN DEGREE AND FOREIGN LICENSE WITH CGFNS-LPN LICENSEES

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) instructs you on the steps necessary to certify your foreign degree and licensure. Here are the steps:

- Apply for a CGFNS Evaluation
- Provide the required documents for review
- Provide translations for any documents not in English. This is most often done through your foreign school(s) or licensing agency. You will need to research how to do this and what you will be charged by these institutions
- After you complete the Evaluation, CGFNS will automatically forward your document to the Michigan Board of Nursing
- The certificate is valid for 2 years from the date of issuance.

- Adult medical nursing
- Adult surgical nursing
- Obstetrics (maternal and infant health)
- Pediatrics (care of children)
- Psychiatric or mental health nursing

If your degree is not deemed comparable, you will need to return to school for a degree program to qualify you for licensure as a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse. You should research nursing education programs in your area, and bring your transcripts and credential evaluation to the program coordinators to see if you can receive advanced standing for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). The quickest route to becoming an RN or LPN may be to earn an Associate's Degree of Nursing. However, if you choose this option you will be settling for a U.S. degree that is not as advanced as your foreign degree, and you will have to continue studying for a BSN if you want better career opportunities.

If you hold a BSN from another country, your degree might be determined comparable to the minimum standard required by the State of Michigan. However, sometimes different standards in nursing practice can affect your degree evaluation, such as male nurses not practicing obstetrical nursing, or nurse midwives not receiving training in other areas of nursing.

II. GET FINGERPRINTED VIA A MICHIGAN-APPROVED VENDOR FOR A CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

Directions for completing the fingerprint check are included in an initial email once you apply on line. Call the approved vendor to set up an appointment. It is critical that you save the receipt as proof that you have taken this step. You may need to provide it in case there are any questions about your background check.

III. APPLY ONLINE AT www.michigna.gov/MiPLUS

- CGFNS Certification Program (RN) or CGFNS Professional Evaluation (LPN) submitted from CGFNS directly
- Fee

The licensure application is valid for 2 years.

REGISTER WITH PEARSON VUE FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAMINATION (NCLEX) BY WEB, MAIL OR TELEPHONE

Register with Pearson for the NCLEX after you have submitted your application online.

IV. RECEIVE AN APPROVAL EMAIL NOTIFICATION FROM LARA AND AUTHORIZATION TO TEST (ATT); SCHEDULE YOUR TESTING APPOINTMENT WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAMINATION (NCLEX)

You have only 90 days from receipt of the ATT to take the NCLEX. Set up your appointment immediately. Instructions are included in the ATT notice.

V. TAKE AND PASS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAMINATION (NCLEX) AND RECEIVE A PASSAGE LETTER

Your NCLEX scores should be available to LARA within one month after testing. Once you have received a passing grade on the NCLEX your licensure will be issued as soon as it can be processed, usually within 2 weeks.

3. TESTS

The National Council Licensure Examination is the only examination required in the Michigan Licensure process.

TEST TECHNOLOGY OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAMINATION

The NCLEX is computer-based test, called a variable length adaptive test. This means that the test will adjust its difficulty level, content, and number of questions based on your answers. The test will continue until all content areas are covered in the required proportions, and the system is 95% certain that your abilities are either above or below the passing standard due to its analysis of your answers. As a result, you may be asked to answer anywhere from 75 to 265 items. Test takers with either very high or very low

abilities tend to have the tests with the fewest items. You are not allowed to skip any questions, but you should avoid making random guesses, as this can quickly lower your score. The exam is mostly multiple-choice but other question types are also included. You will be given a short tutorial that will expose you to the different question types. You cannot bring reference materials or other testing aids to the exam. An on-screen calculator is provided for some problems.

CONTENT AREAS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAMINATION

The content of the NCLEX concentrates on the patient as the focus of care. The current NCLEX exam is divided into four categories of Client Needs, some of which have subcategories. The percentages show the approximate percent of questions each test taker will receive in the category:

1. Safe and Effective Care Environment
 - Management of Care (17-23%)
 - Safety and Infection Control (9-15%)
2. Health Promotion and Maintenance (6-12%)
3. Psychosocial Integrity (6-12%)
4. Physiological Integrity
 - Basic Care and Comfort (6-12%)
 - Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies (12-18%)
 - Reduction of Risk Potential (9-15%)
 - Physiological Adaptation (11-17%)

SCHEDULING AND TESTING SITE PROCEDURES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL LICENSURE EXAMINATION

Pearson Vue holds the NCLEX in testing centers across the U.S. and internationally. You can register information with Pearson and pay for the test (\$200), but you cannot schedule the NCLEX exam until your application for Licensure by Examination has been processed and you have received an Authorization to Test (ATT) notice. The ATT includes detailed instructions for choosing a testing center and scheduling a date to take the NCLEX. The ATT is valid for only 90 days, so you should not delay in scheduling an exam session.

On the day of the test, you must bring the ATT and acceptable identification. You will be fingerprinted and photographed before your test and will be fingerprinted when you re-enter the testing area after breaks. You should arrive at least a half hour early; you will not be allowed to take the test if you arrive more than a half hour late for your appointment. You will have up to six hours to complete the test, including time scheduled for the computer tutorial and optional breaks.

All Applicants must pass the NCLEX within 12 months of his or her first attempt at the test in Michigan. All Applicants must pass the NCLEX within 12 months of his or her first attempt at the test in Michigan or any other state. If the NCLEX is not passed after 3 attempts within this 12-month period, the applicant must complete a refresher course. After completing the refresher course, the applicant may take the examination 3 more times. An applicant has a maximum total of 6 attempts to pass the NCLEX.

FAILING THE NCLEX

If you fail your exam, the Michigan Board of Nursing will send you a Candidate Performance Report which shows the areas that need improvement. You can use the report to learn what areas to study before you retake the exam. You may take the NCLEX again after waiting 45 days. If your score is far from passing you should consider additional test preparation or taking refresher courses so that you can pass in the three-year period after your first application.

PRACTICING FOR THE NCLEX

There are many different resources that can help you prepare for the content and the computer based testing technology. There are a variety of test preparation resources for low cost. Consider investing in test preparation as it may save you money by not having to pay to retake the test and by entering the job market faster. Please refer to *Important Links* for test preparation options.

4. OTHER CAREERS AND CREDENTIALS

LOWER-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES

You may want to consider if taking a lower-level job in healthcare in the short-term can help you meet longer-term goals of licensing as a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse.

Preparing for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) can take time. Working in healthcare in a different way and with fewer responsibilities may offer you some advantages, such as

- employers paying for tuition and fees associated with the NCLEX and licensing
- more energy to focus on studying
- a chance to adapt to the U.S. healthcare system and workplace culture in a lower-pressure environment

You should be honest with your employer about your long-term plans and be sure that they have benefits such as tuition reimbursement or schedule flexibility that will support your goals.

CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT, CNA

CNAs are also commonly referred to as nurses' aides or orderlies. CNAs have very limited responsibilities and work under nurse supervision. Additionally, you must pass a test and a criminal background check before working as a CNA. Working as a CNA in the healthcare field will provide you with an opportunity to build a professional network, gain U.S. experience that is highly relevant to your profession, and possibly receive tuition reimbursement for relicensing purposes. CNAs typically earn approximately \$12 per hour.

Applications and additional Information regarding certification as a CNA can be reviewed at <https://www.prometric.com/en-us/clients/Nurseaide/Pages/MI.aspx>.

HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER

If you are bilingual and a strong communicator, you may want to research opportunities for work in hospitals as an interpreter. This type of role is not regulated in Michigan, so standards for employment as well as pay and benefits may be very different depending on the employer. You are more likely to have benefits such as tuition reimbursement if you find work as a direct employee of a healthcare facility, instead of working for a company that provides interpretation services to hospitals. You may want to begin your research by directly contacting human resource departments at hospitals.

HIGHER-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES

After you receive your Registered Nurse license in Michigan, you may find you want to continue your professional development. If you have the equivalent of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, you can qualify to train as an Advanced Practice Nurse (APRN).

ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE (APRN)

The advanced practice nurse is the highest certification in nursing practice and involves graduate school education, examination, and certification processes beyond the level required of Registered Nurses. APRNs in most states are allowed a more independent nursing practice. APRNs can choose from specialties in one of 3 recognized practice areas:

- Certified Clinical Nurse Specialist •
- Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)
- Nurse Practitioner (CNP).

5. BEYOND LICENSING

MAINTAINING LICENSURE

Nurses must meet continuing education requirements of 25 hours every 2 years. The education must be given by a provider approved by the Michigan Board of Nursing.

Licenses expire initially after one year and every two years, thereafter. LARA sends a notice reminding you to renew your license, so be certain to keep your contact information up-to-date with their office. You are responsible for renewing your license even if you do not receive a notice from the Department. You must renew online. You will have sixty days after the expiration date in which you may continue to practice without a lapse in your license as long as you renew within that sixty day grace period. If you do not renew during that grace period, the expiration date of your license will revert back to the expiration date. Be careful: if you continue to practice after your license has expired (lapsed), you could have disciplinary action taken against you. If your license does expire, you will be required to apply for relicensure to reactivate your license.

Every time you renew your license you must state that you have met the 25 hour Continuing Education requirement or CE. You must also complete training in identifying victims of human trafficking. You need to keep the information on file in case you are audited. There are many opportunities to earn these hours, but special rules apply. You should check the LARA website for details, or consider joining a professional association that offers CE opportunities to members.

The requirements for continuing education for nurses are explained in these links:

[NURSING CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS](#)

[NURSING SPECIALTY CONTINUING EDUCATION](#)

[LICENSING MOBILITY \(RECIPROCITY\)](#)

The state of Michigan does not have any shared agreement to honor the nursing licenses of other states. It grants licensing to nurses by either examination (the process described in this topic) or endorsement (where a registered nurse licensed in another state must meet all Michigan requirements for licensing). Fortunately, since the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) is accepted by all states, a registered nurse looking to relocate to Michigan will not have to retake the NCLEX. However, the country is now moving toward increased mobility of nursing licenses, as the nursing shortage encourages states to attract more qualified professionals. See the National Resources part of the *Important Links* section to view the states that are currently participating in mutual licensing reciprocity for licensed practice nurses and registered nurses; you can

learn more about the Nurse Licensure Compact through the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

6. IMPORTANT LINKS

Common Words used: REGULATION:

- The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) issues licenses for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), Registered Professional Nurses (RN) and certifications for Advanced Practice Nurses (APRN). Application packets (both by Examination and by Endorsement) can be downloaded on the homepage.
- Contact information: Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Professional Licensing, PO Box 30670, Lansing MI 48909
- Telephone Number 517-335-0918; Fax: 517-373-1044 Email: bplhelp@michigan.gov
- The law that regulates licensing for all health professions including can be read at <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-368-1978-15>;
- The administrative rules governing nursing practice in Michigan can be located at: http://w3.lara.state.mi.us/orr/AdminCode.aspx?AdminCode=Department&Dpt=LR&Level_1=Bureau+of+Professional+Licensing
- The state of Michigan has established the Michigan Center for Nursing to promote nursing in the state. It has useful links to education and employment information, as well as professional associations
- NURSYS provides verification of licensure in many state boards TESTING:
- Pearson Vue administers the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) and gathers important information and further links regarding the NCLEX
- Download the latest NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin as well as a small software program that offers an online tutorial for the NCLEX computer-based exam interface - this will familiarize you with the appearance and operation of the interface including the variety of possible question formats (multiple choice, ordering, fill in the blank)

CREDENTIALS:

- The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) in Philadelphia, PA is accepted in Michigan for RN licensure. Phone: (215) 349-8767 ext. 476. Some resource tools include their useful CP Application Instructions Handbook and fee schedule

NATIONAL RESOURCES:

- The National Council on State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) represents member Nursing Boards for all 50 states. It develops the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). It is also, coincidentally, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Its website also has an [up-to-date map of states which have formed a Nurse Licensure Compact](#)
- National Council on State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Learning Extension is a portal for elearning for nursing that includes test preparation for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) for nursing candidates and continuing education for practicing nurses at all levels. The NCSBN's Review for the NCLEX-RN® Examination v5.4 is an online subscription service that includes extensive NCLEX preparation resources, including skills assessment to identify knowledge gaps, plus curriculum, test questions and interactive exercises
- The American Nurses Association is a national organization that represents nurses and advocates for nursing issues.