

## MICHIGAN SANITARIAN (SAN) LICENSING GUIDE FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

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### 1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN

#### OVERVIEW

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

#### REGULATION OF THE SANITARIAN PROFESSION

The practice of the sanitarian profession in Michigan is regulated by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) on behalf of the Michigan Board of Sanitarians. You must be licensed to practice as a sanitarian (SAN) in Michigan.

The guide assumes that you hold the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's or master's degree in the field of environmental health and that your Michigan license will be your first U.S. sanitarian license. As a foreign-educated SAN, you are required to first have your environmental health education evaluated by the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) and sit for the exam in order to become registered as a Sanitarian in Michigan. Applications and fees must be submitted to NEHA for review. Please visit [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org) for applications and additional information.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

### OVERVIEW

Internationally educated Sanitarians need to meet several requirements to receive Licensure by Examination as a SAN in Michigan.

#### I. EVALUATE YOUR FOREIGN DEGREE

LARA requires that you have your foreign sanitarian degree evaluated using the NEHA credential exam.

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) directs you on the steps necessary to evaluate your foreign degree and sit for the credentialing exam. Here are the steps:

- You must submit your foreign credential evaluation with your credential application, NEHA strongly recommends using a NACES member company which can be found at [www.naces.org](http://www.naces.org)
- If your sanitarian education was not taught in English, your report will include a determination of English language proficiency as tested on the TOEFL examination.
- Apply and pay online for the educational credentials exam
- Arrange for your certification to be sent directly to the Michigan Board of Sanitarians

If your degree is not deemed equivalent to a U.S. degree, you will be provided information about the courses or subject areas in which you are deficient. If the Educational Credentials Review results in your education being found “not equivalent”, you may apply to for a re-evaluation of your educational credentials after submitting additional information about your education. You must work directly with your selected credentialing agency in correcting any deficiencies in your report; the Michigan Board of Sanitarians has no role in the re-evaluation process.

#### II. SUBMIT YOUR LICENSURE APPLICATION, REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, AND PAY APPLICATION FEE

Your application sent to the Michigan Board of Sanitarian should include:

- Licensure application from LARA that can be downloaded from [www.michigan.gov/healthlicense](http://www.michigan.gov/healthlicense)
- Fee: paid by a check or money order drawn on a U.S. financial institution and made payable to the State of Michigan
- If you have taken and passed the REHS/RS national exam, you must arrange to have your scores forwarded to the Michigan Board
- If you do not currently hold the REHS/RS credential you must have your educational institution forward your final official transcripts to our office

-If you have a bachelor's degree in an environmental health field, you must have at least 2 years' experience in the environmental health field. If you have a master's degree in an environmental health field, you have to have at least 1 year experience in the field of environmental health.

- An applicant whose SAN education program was taught in a language other than English shall satisfactorily complete the TOEFL or the TOEFLib
- Fingerprint/Criminal Background Check report

The licensure application and fee are valid for 2 years. If you have not met all licensing requirements within these 2 years you will need to submit a new application and pay the processing fee again.

### III. GET FINGERPRINTED VIA A MICHIGAN-APPROVED VENDOR FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

Directions for completing the fingerprint requirement are mailed to you from the Department upon receipt of your application.

### 3. TESTS

To become a licensed SAN in Michigan, you must take and pass the REHS/RS credential exam.

The REHS/RS credential exam consists of 250 multiple choice split into two parts of 125 questions each. You will have a total of 4 hours to complete the exam with 2 hours for each part. Out of the 250 questions only 225 will be scored.

## CONTENT AREAS OF THE SANTARIAN EXAM

The content of the REHS/RS measures knowledge important for independent practice as a sanitarian in all primary employment settings. The 250 multiple choice questions assess knowledge in conducting facility inspections, conducting investigations, ensuring compliance, promoting environmental public health awareness, and responding to emergencies. The percentages show the approximate percent of questions each test taker will receive in the category:

1. Conducting Facility Inspections (35%)
2. Conducting System Inspections (20%)
3. Conducting Investigations (14%)
4. Ensuring Compliance (13%)
5. Promoting Environmental Public Health Awareness (10%)
6. Responding To Emergencies (8%)

## SCHEDULING AND TESTING SITE PROCEDURES OF THE REHS/RS SANITARIAN EXAM

REHS/RS exams are offered annually at the NEHA Annual Educational Conference, as well as on computer through Pearson Vue. To find a Pearson Vue testing center near you please visit [www.pearsonvue.com/neha](http://www.pearsonvue.com/neha)

On the day of the test you must bring your admission ticket and acceptable form of identification. Acceptable ID is a currently valid, government-issued photo ID (passport, driver's license, etc.). You should arrive at least a half hour early; you will not be allowed to take the test if you arrive more than fifteen minutes late for your appointment. You will have up to 2 hours per sections to complete the test.

## FAILING THE REHS/RS SANITARIAN EXAM

The NEHA REHS/RS will report scores using scaled scores that range from 0 to 900 with a passing score of 650. Candidates who fail the exam will receive a score between 0 and 649. All exam scores will be mailed to you within 4-6 weeks after the administration of your exam. If you have failed you may reapply to take the exam again at [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org)

## PRACTICING FOR THE REHS/RS

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 available for low cost. The NEHA offers a NEHA Credentialing Handbook at no charge that outlines all policies you are expected to follow.

## 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 sanitarian.

Preparing for the REHS/RS 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 REHS/RS 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. You may find some employers have benefits such as tuition reimbursement or schedule flexibility that will support your goals.

### 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.

## **5. BEYOND LICENSING**

### **MAINTAINING LICENSURE**

Sanitarians must renew their license every 2 years. Licenses expire on November 30th every two years. 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 to November 30. 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.

There are currently no continuing education requirements that must be met in order to renew a license. However, you are required to complete training in identifying victims of human trafficking.

### **LICENSING MOBILITY (RECIPROCITY)**

The state of Michigan does not have any shared agreement to honor the sanitarian licenses of other states. It grants licensing to sanitarians by either examination (the process described in this topic) or endorsement (where a sanitarian licensed in another state must meet all Michigan requirements for licensing).

## 6. IMPORTANT LINKS

### LICENSING AND REGULATION:

- The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) issues licenses for Sanitarians. Application packets (both by Examination and by Endorsement) can be downloaded on the homepage.
- The main page for the licensing of any health profession is [www.michigan.gov/healthlicense](http://www.michigan.gov/healthlicense). The page that specifically concerns sanitarians:
- [http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-72600\\_72603\\_27529\\_27553---.00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-72600_72603_27529_27553---.00.html) and it includes information regarding the boards, applications and frequently asked questions.
- 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](mailto: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 sanitarian 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](http://w3.lara.state.mi.us/orr/AdminCode.aspx?AdminCode=Department&Dpt=LR&Level_1=Bureau+of+Professional+Licensing)

### CREDENTIAL REVIEW AGENCIES

- National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) [www.naces.org/](http://www.naces.org/)
- National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org)

### TESTING

- Pearson Vue [www.pearsonvue.com/neha](http://www.pearsonvue.com/neha)