

The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) & Alaska: The Facts

By the Alaska Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Updated January 2024

What the NLC is:

- The NLC allows registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) to have one multistate license, with the privilege to practice in their home state and other participating NLC states without applying, paying, or waiting for additional licenses. It is an agreement between all participating U.S. jurisdictions.
- 41 U.S. jurisdictions have joined the NLC to date.
 - Another eight (8) U.S. jurisdictions have pending legislation to join, including Alaska.
- Joining will:
 - Reduce the burden, cost, and wait time for experienced nurse's looking to work in Alaska.
 - Allow Alaska's hospitals and healthcare facilities to recruit and employ nurses more quickly.
 - Allow the Alaska Board of Nursing and the Alaska licensing division to better serve and support those nurses with residency in Alaska or that are not interested in (or do not qualify for) multistate licenses.
 - Potentially result in *reduced* costs for the nurse licensing program in Alaska, which translates to reduced license fees due to a significant reduction in applications.
 - Provide efficiency and ease of transition for active-duty military members or spouses who are RNs or LPNs coming to Alaska.
 - Help Alaska's economy, as the U.S. Department of Defense has stated military expansion decisions will include consideration of which states have demonstrated support for military families through license mobility laws and provisions.
- *For more information, check out the [NLC website](#) and/or the [Alaska Board of Nursing's NLC webpage](#).*

How a State Joins the NLC:

- A state must adopt the standard compact language exactly as adopted by all other party states into their statutes through the passage of a bill by that State's Legislature.
- For Alaska, that means passing House Bill 149 (sponsored by Representative Prax) or Senate Bill 130 (sponsored by Senator Olson) in the 33rd Legislative Session.

Alaska's Nurse Support for the NLC:

- In October 2023, the Alaska Board of Nursing sent a survey to all 20,000+ actively licensed RNs and LPNs.
- 4,953 responses were received: 92% support Alaska joining the NLC, 5% oppose, and 3% had no opinion.
 - 60% listed Alaska as their primary state of residence and of those: 89% support, 7.5% oppose, and 3.5% have no opinion.
 - 25% stated Alaska is the first state where they ever held a license and of those: 86% support, 10% oppose, and 4% have no opinion.
 - 23% stated they were members of a union during employment and of those: 85% support, 12% oppose, and 3% have no opinion.
- These results mirror the same level of support demonstrated by the survey conducted in 2019.
- All of Alaska's nursing schools combined graduate around 325 nursing graduates per year.
 - The option to obtain a multistate license is appealing to new graduates.
 - Many graduates currently leave Alaska to establish residency in a party state so they can obtain a multistate license and operate as a travel nurse under one license.
 - Until Alaska joins the NLC, we make it less enticing to stay in Alaska or to come back – as reestablishing residency in a non-compact State means loss of the multistate license.
 - Additionally, instructing in a nursing school requires an Alaska license. Joining the NLC gives our nursing schools better access to nursing educators, which makes it more possible to “grow our own”.
- *For more information, check out the [2023 NLC Survey Report](#).*

Alaska's Nursing Shortage:

- Alaska had a 21% vacancy rate in RN positions in its hospitals.
- The average time to fill a vacant hospital RN position is 118 days and 157 days for a long-term care facility RN position.
- Alaska needs nearly 1,366 new nursing recruits annually.
- Alaska is projected to lead the nation in nursing vacancy rates by 2030.
- Nurse vacancies result in less access to care for Alaskans, clinic/facility closures, longer wait times as hospitals and ERs, and potentially delivery of lower standards of care.
- The longer Alaska waits to join the NLC and requires nurses to get an Alaska-specific license when most other states do not, the harder it will become to recruit travel nurses.
- *For more information, check out the [2023 Alaska Healthcare Workforce Analysis Report](#).*

Alaska's Public Safety Under the NLC:

- The requirements to qualify for a multistate NLC license are more stringent than the requirements to obtain an Alaska-specific nurse license.
- Nurses cannot qualify for a multistate license if they have not passed the national nursing examination, if their license has been disciplined, if they've ever been convicted of a felony, or if they've ever been convicted of a misdemeanor related to nursing practice.
- The Alaska Board of Nursing has unanimously supported and pursued Alaska joining the NLC since 2019. The Dunleavy Administration's support and pursuit of NLC legislation, which also began in 2019, stemmed from the board's support and desire to join.

Alaska's Retained State Sovereignty Under the NLC:

- It's literally written into the NLC language that will be enacted into law!
- Article VII(a)(3) and III(d)-(e) confirm Alaska will retain state sovereignty and all regulatory authority of nursing practice in the state, regardless of whether the nurse is practicing under a license issued by the Alaska Board of Nursing, or a multistate license issued by a party state.
- All nurses are required to comply with the nursing laws in the state their patient is located, regardless of where the nurse is located, or which state issued their nursing license – same as is required now.

Authority Over the NLC:

- Because each state must adopt the standard compact language into their state statutes, the primary function requirements of the NLC cannot change unless and until the change is enacted into the laws of all party states.
- Only the NLC Commission can amend or create rules and bylaws, and those must only be within the authority given within the standard compact language adopted into each party state's laws.
- Though the NLC was created by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), it's governed only by the NLC Commission which is made up of one administrator from each party state who each gets one vote. Only the NLC Commission has authority, and NCSBN does not have a seat at that table.