



Coronavirus Omnibus Legislation (HB197) – RN and LPN Initial Licensing FAQs **March 27, 2020; Updated April 24, 2020**

Coronavirus Omnibus Legislation (HB197) was signed by Governor DeWine on March 27, 2020. The law suspends, for the period of the COVID-19 emergency, the law requiring an applicant for licensure by examination to have passed the national standardized licensure examination approved by the Ohio Board of Nursing (Board). The FAQs below respond to questions about licensure based on the COVID-19 Omnibus Amendment.

All other types of licenses continue to be issued. Board operations are continuing through telework. The Board is issuing reciprocity temporary permits for out-of-state nurses in 1 business day and expediting all other types of licenses, including reinstatements and reactivations.

Q: Are we able to be licensed as a RN or LPN without taking the NCLEX?

A: Yes, on a temporary basis. The Coronavirus Omnibus Legislation (HB197), signed into law on March 27, 2020 suspends, for the period of the COVID-19 emergency, the law requiring an applicant for licensure by examination to have passed the national standardized licensure examination approved by the Ohio Board of Nursing (Board).

Q: Are there other licensing requirements that I must meet to be licensed?

A: Yes. The law authorizes the Board to issue licenses to practice as a RN or LPN to applicants who meet the remaining legal requirements, including completing a Board-approved nursing education program and criminal records check (FBI/BCI).

Q: How long will a license based on the COVID-19 Omnibus Amendment be valid?

A: The license will be valid until whichever of the following dates occurs first: (1) the date that is ninety days after December 1, 2020; (2) the date that is ninety days after the duration of the period of the emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-01D.

*Note that within the Ohio elicense verification system, all LPN licenses will display an October 31, 2020 expiration date, and RN licenses will show an October 31, 2021 expiration date, whether issued according to HB 197 ("temporary licenses") or not. Because the COVID-19 situation is fluid, and it is not certain when the declared emergency will terminate, the October 31 date is subject to change, and temporary licenses will expire according to the above language. **The Board will make the temporary license of any holder who has not passed the NCLEX by the above expiration date inactive until the NCLEX is passed.***

Q: Are the testing sites for taking the NCLEX examination open?

A: They are now open on a limited basis. These examinations are used by all U.S. states/territories to test entry-level nursing competence of candidates for licensure. NCSBN administers the examination through Pearson VUE in testing sites. Pearson VUE issued a statement suspending all testing on March 17, 2020. On March 25, 2020, some sites across the country opened, but without providing full testing capacity, the NCLEX will continue to be unavailable to the majority of candidates. Please visit their website for the most up to date availability.

Q: How do I apply for initial licensure as a RN or LPN?

A: To apply, complete the steps below. Detailed information about all aspects of licensing can be found at www.nursing.ohio.gov.

1. Submit an application online, by going to www.nursing.ohio.gov and click on the large red button 
2. Pay the application fee when submitting the application. See the Schedule of fees at <https://nursing.ohio.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Fee-Schedule.pdf>
3. Provide evidence of nursing education program completion; the education program must submit a Program Completion Letter directly to the Board
4. Complete a criminal records check that includes BCI and FBI checks

Q: How quickly will I be licensed?

A: While we cannot give you an exact time, Board staff are working remotely and continuing ALL Board operations. Additional resources have been assigned to licensing and all licensing has been expedited. The Board expects a minimum of 5,000 applicants for initial licenses and even with additional resources and working as quickly as possible, there may be some delays. Please know we are diligently processing applications as quickly as possible.

Q: What else in addition to my online application is needed for me to be licensed?

A: The Board cannot issue the initial license without a Program Completion Letter from your education program and a completed Criminal Records Checks (CRCs). Information regarding CRCs is located on the Board website under Licensing & Certification tab at the top.

Q: Who do I contact about my license or to check on it?

A: To check on the status of documents submitted, sign into your eLicense account, click options, then click review  status. To see if you have been issued a license, go to www.nursing.ohio.gov and click on

Q: I am calling and emailing the Board. When should I expect a response?

A: While Board staff are striving to respond, our primary focus is to issue licenses as quickly as possible, so responses to calls and emails will be delayed. Expedited licensing to increase the nursing workforce is vital during the pandemic. We appreciate your understanding that responses may be delayed.

Q: How can I find out more information about applying for a license?

A: All license applications must be submitted online. There are "sample" applications on the Board website that are provided for reference purposes only. For detailed information about all aspects of licensure, including criminal records checks, go to www.nursing.ohio.gov, click on the top tab "Licensing, Certification & CE", then click on RN, APRN, LPN section to see a list of resources that link to informational documents.

Q: Some people are raising concerns about public safety, but I believe I can practice safely.

A: In balancing public safety, in order to issue licenses, the law requires that the Board receive Program Completion Letters from nursing programs that the applicant has successfully completed the program. This assures that the applicants, although they have not passed the NCLEX, have obtained the necessary education to engage in safe nursing practice. This also prevents imposters from obtaining licenses. Administrators are to continue the current practice of emailing Completion Letters to the Board. This will assure Completion Letters are received and processed. Do NOT mail them by USPS.

Q: I have a HB 197 temporary license. Will other states authorize license reciprocity (endorsement) in their state based on this Ohio license?

Not all states provide reciprocity for a license issued without passing the NCLEX examination. You need to contact the state board of nursing in the state where you are seeking reciprocity. The nursing board in that state will make the determination based on their licensing laws and administrative rules.