



Iowa Board of Nursing

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To: Iowa Nursing Employers
From: Kathy Weinberg, Executive Director
Date: April 29, 2020
Re: Guidance for Emergency Nursing Licenses

Guidance for Employers Hiring Nurses Issued Emergency RN, LPN, and ARNP Licenses

What is an emergency license?

Governor Reynolds's March 22, 2020 Proclamation of Disaster Emergency authorized the Board of Nursing to issue emergency licenses to individuals who have completed sufficient minimum education but are unable to obtain a license through the normal procedures due to COVID-19 related hardships, such as the closure of NCLEX or national certifying examination testing locations. The rules governing emergency licenses can be found at 655 Iowa Administrative Code rule 3.11. This license allows recent nursing graduates who are eligible to sit for the NCLEX or national certifying exams, but are unable to take the test due to testing center closures, to begin practicing while they wait for the opportunity to take the exams. Although these types of licenses have informally been referred to as "graduate nurse" licenses, they are "emergency licenses" for the purposes of the Board.

When does an emergency license expire?

There are two ways for emergency licenses to expire. First, if a person takes the NCLEX or national certifying examination and does not pass, the person's emergency license expires immediately. A person may not continue to work on an emergency license after receiving a failing examination result. Second, emergency licenses will expire sixty (60) days after the expiration or termination of Governor Reynolds's March 22, 2020 Proclamation of Disaster Emergency. As of the date of this guidance document, the Proclamation has been extended until 11:59 p.m. on May 27, 2020. If the Proclamation is further extended, the emergency license will expire sixty days after the new end date.

Are there any practice limitations for emergency licenses?

An emergency license provides the same practice authority as a regular license issued by the Board. A nurse with an emergency RN, LPN, or ARNP license may practice within his or her role to the same extent as a regular RN, LPN, or ARNP licensee. Emergency licensees are also subject

to the same regulations as regular licensees, and may be disciplined by the Board for any rule violations. Employers are encouraged to review 655 Iowa Administrative Code with emergency licensees and ensure that each nurse has sufficient education, training, and competence to perform his or her assigned duties.

If a nurse with an emergency RN or LPN license passes the NCLEX exam, how does that nurse obtain a regular RN or LPN license?

NCSBN will notify the Board that a person has passed the NCLEX examination. Once the Board receives confirmation of the passing result, the Board will issue that person a non-emergency, single-state license to practice as an RN or LPN in Iowa. The license will be a single-state license until the person successfully passes the criminal background check, pursuant to the Nurse Licensure Compact.

How does a nurse with an emergency license obtain a multi-state RN or LPN license?

When an applicant applied for the emergency license, the applicant was sent a criminal background check packet. In that packet was a waiver form and two fingerprint cards. In order to receive a multi-state license under the Nurse Licensure Compact, the person must pass a criminal background check. Therefore, the person must return the signed waiver form and two completed fingerprint cards to the Board office. Once the Board receives confirmation that the person has passed the background check, the person's license will be switched from a single-state to a multi-state license. The nurse will keep the same license number, but will have the privilege to practice in states that are members of the nurse licensure compact.

If a nurse with an emergency ARNP licenses passes the national certifying examination, how does that nurse obtain a regular ARNP license?

The nurse must send a copy of the national certification certificate to the Board office. Once the Board receives confirmation that the person is certified, the Board will issue the person a regular, non-emergency ARNP license.

Do emergency licensees have to use a different title or abbreviation when signing their name?

No, emergency licensees may use the titles "Registered Nurse" or "Licensed Practical Nurse," or "Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner," or the "RN", "LPN" or "ARNP" abbreviations after their names when practicing pursuant to an emergency license.

How can an employer verify that a nurse has been issued an emergency license?

All emergency licensees will be able to validate their licenses through IBON Online Services. Please visit the Board's website at nursing.iowa.gov, and click "IBON Online Services" to access the Board's online license verification tools.