



STATE OF IOWA

Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg

BOARD OF NURSING
Kathleen R. Weinberg, MSN, RN
Executive Director

To: Iowa Nursing Education Programs and Employers
From: Kathy Weinberg, Executive Director
Date: May 11, 2021
Re: Updated Information on Emergency Nursing Licenses and Background Checks

The following is an update on the Board of Nursing's licensure requirements and procedures in light of the April 30, 2021 Proclamation of Disaster Emergency.

A. Emergency License Authority and Duration.

On April 30, 2021, Governor Reynolds issued another Proclamation of Disaster Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In section 69, Governor Reynolds extended the provision authorizing the Nursing Board to issue emergency licenses to nursing graduates who had not yet taken the NCLEX or national certification exam. The authority to issue emergency licenses was extended through May 30. However, the provision concluded with the following sentence: "Iowans should not expect that this suspension will be extended beyond May 30, 2021." Accordingly, the Nursing Board does not anticipate that its authority to issue emergency licenses will exist after May 30, 2021.

Prospective applicants who wish to obtain an emergency license while they wait to sit for the NCLEX or national certifying exam must ensure their application materials are submitted and **received by the Board prior to the Proclamation's expiration or termination.** If the Proclamation authority indeed expires on or around May 30, 2021, the Board will be unable to issue an emergency licenses to applicants whose materials are received after the expiration date. After the Proclamation's expiration, applicants for RN, LPN, and ARNP licensure must satisfy all requirements for licensure provided in Chapter 3 and Chapter 7 prior to being issued a license, including passing the NCLEX or national certifying exam.

Significantly, the Board's rules provide that an **emergency license expires sixty (60) days after the expiration or termination of the Proclamation,** or upon receiving a failing result on the NCLEX or national certification exam, whichever is sooner. If the Proclamation authority indeed expires on or around May 30, 2021, emergency licensees must submit proof of passing

the NCLEX or national certifying exam within 60 days of the expiration date. Failure to submit proof of passing the NCLEX or national certifying exam within 60 days of the expiration date will result in the license lapsing, and the individual may no longer practice on that license. The Board strongly encourages all nursing education programs and nursing employers to confer with their students and employees to ensure all application materials are submitted on time to prevent any unnecessary break in licensure.

B. Background Check Requirements.

The April 30, 2021 Proclamation of Disaster Emergency also extended the provision temporarily suspending any administrative rules requiring completion of a criminal background check as a condition of obtaining a license to practice nursing. As with the emergency licenses, this provision similarly concluded with the following sentence: “Iowans should not expect this suspension will be extended beyond May 30, 2021.” Accordingly, prospective LPN and RN applicants should plan to submit two completed fingerprint cards and a signed waiver form in order to be issued licenses.

Because of the Proclamation temporarily suspending background check requirements, applicants who submitted their materials without their fingerprint cards and signed waiver have been issued single-state licenses. If the Proclamation provision indeed expires on or around May 30, 2021, those individuals who were issued licenses without completing their background check **must return their completed fingerprint packet and signed waiver form to the Board within sixty (60) days of the expiration of the Proclamation.** Failure to timely return the packet may result in the license being rescinded. The Board encourages all education programs and employers to confer with their students and employees to ensure all outstanding background checks are completed on time to prevent any unnecessary break in licensure.