

LICENSURE BASICS

Recently, a nurse wrote me with much anxiety over the thought of traveling and dealing with licensure. The licensure process can seem overwhelming at times if you are looking at the big picture. Her questions inspired me to write about the basics of the licensure process.

Unfortunately, no standardized licensing process exists for nurses. Yet, an effort is being made. Several states have agreed to what is called a licensure compact agreement. You may have heard of it? You have to reside and originate in one of the compact licensure states and then you can use your nursing license like you use your driver's license from state to state. I will provide more information on compact licensure in future articles.

What if you don't live in a compact licensure state?

If you do not live in a compact state.....the licensure process will be different for each state you wish to go to. Each state has different CEU requirement, costs, processing times, and temporary license expiration times. A few states don't offer temporary licenses at all.

Do you need CEU's and if so how many?

Many states have different CEU requirements and may or may not require you to show your CEU's to get the licensed. Furthermore, some states require proof of continuing education units to renew, while others conduct random audits throughout the year. Meanwhile, states such as New York may require you to have classes on topics such as abuse and aids before granting licensure.

What if you want to travel right away?

If you want to travel right away, talk to your recruiter. Recruiters often have an idea which states have a relatively easy and fast licensure process. Some states are what they call "walk through" states where you can literally take your paperwork into the office and get licensed the same day.

Do companies reimburse for Licensure?

Licensure reimbursement is one of those negotiable benefits. Not all companies offer it. If they do, it is often a partial reimbursement and is usually paid after you begin your assignment.

Should you get a permanent license?

Travelers often recommend getting a permanent license. Some temporary licenses do not stay active for a full 3 months (the length of most assignments). Also, you never know when you may end up liking an assignment location and want to extend your assignment or take another assignment in the same state. With a permanent license your options are open.

Should you keep active licensure in your home state?

I would recommend you keep your home state license active for a few reasons. You will want maximize your tax benefits by maintaining a permanent residence, which means, you will need to return home and work occasionally to show you still live there. Also, you never know when you will want to return home for a while to visit friends or relatives.

However, if you know you won't want to return home and you don't care to maintain a permanent residence; you can request that your license be put in inactive status. This way... they still keep you on record and the process is easier to reactivate later than to reapply for licensure. Furthermore, you usually don't have to make payments for an inactive license.

It all sounds complicated if you try to look at the big picture all at once, but it really isn't. The first step is to decide where you want to travel. Then see how long it will take to obtain your license and what the requirements are before you commit to a start date. Overall, licensure is a fairly simple process in most states and isn't usually an obstacle to traveling. Yet, it is a factor to consider when managing your time and commitments.