



Iowa Board of Nursing

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MEMORANDUM

To: Nurse Licensees, Nursing Employers and Nurse Educators

From: Kathy Weinberg, Executive Director

Date: June 1, 2021

Subject: Proclamation and Other Licensing Guidance

In light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Governor Kim Reynolds has issued [multiple Proclamations](#) suspending certain regulatory provisions in an effort to provide additional necessary resources and measures to respond to the public health disaster emergency. The Board of Nursing hereby issues this updated guidance relating to the practice of nursing during this public health disaster emergency, including guidance regarding the temporary suspension of administrative rules that directly impact the Board of Nursing and 655 Iowa Administrative Code. This guidance will continue to be updated as the Governor continues to extend or terminate the proclamation provisions.

Nurses Licensed in Non-Compact States

A nurse who holds an active nursing license in another state may provide emergency medical services in response to proclaimed state of emergency. See Iowa Admin. Code r. 655-3.2(2)(c). Accordingly, nurses who are licensed in another jurisdiction that is not a member of the Nurse Licensure Compact, and whose licenses are in good standing, may immediately begin providing nursing care to aid the COVID-19 pandemic without first seeking an Iowa license through endorsement. The authority to provide nursing services on a non-Compact state license ends immediately upon the termination of the public health disaster emergency.

Nurses Whose Licenses Expired or Lapsed Within the Last Five Years

Through her Proclamations of Disaster Emergency, Governor Reynolds temporarily suspended the regulations prohibiting the practice of nursing on an inactive license. The suspension is limited to nurses whose licenses have lapsed or expired within the five (5) years prior to the Proclamation, and is further limited to the provision of nursing services to victims of COVID-19. This suspension of these regulations is effective through **June 26, 2021**, unless the Governor terminates or extends the Proclamation. Accordingly, nurses whose licenses expired within five years of March 17, 2020, and whose licenses are not otherwise restricted due to Board discipline, may immediately begin providing nursing care to aid the COVID-19 pandemic without first reactivating their licenses.

PRIOR LICENSING PROVISIONS THAT ARE NO LONGER IN EFFECT AND

TIME PERIODS FOR RESUMING COMPLIANCE

Emergency Licenses. Governor Reynolds previously authorized the Board to issue emergency licenses to nurses who have not yet obtained initial licenses in Iowa, so long as the nurses have completed sufficient minimum education as determined by the Board. This Proclamation provision expired on May 27, 2021, and thus the Board no longer has the authority to issue emergency licenses. Pursuant to the Board's [emergency license rules](#), all current **emergency licenses will expire on July 26, 2021**, or upon the individual receiving a failing score on the NCLEX or national certifying exam, whichever is sooner. If you hold an emergency RN or LPN license, you must promptly schedule your NCLEX exam and complete your background check. Once the Board receives confirmation that you passed your exam and background check, you will be issued a multi-state license. If you hold an emergency ARNP license, you must send a copy of your national certification certificate to the Board office. Once the Board receives confirmation that you are certified, the Board will issue you a standard ARNP license. Failure to pass the NCLEX exam or become certified by July 26, 2021 will result in your emergency license becoming expired. You may not practice nursing on an expired emergency license and will continue to be unable to practice nursing until you have satisfied all the requirements for, and have been issued by the Board, a standard, non-emergency license.

Criminal Background Checks. Governor Reynolds, previously suspended requirements to complete a criminal background check as a condition for obtaining a professional license. This Proclamation provision expired on May 27, 2021, and thus the Board's prior rules requiring a completed background check as a condition for LPN and RN licensure are back in effect. If you were issued a license without completing a criminal background check, you must **return your completed fingerprint packet and signed waiver form to the Board by July 26, 2021**. Failure to return the packet on time may result in your license being rescinded.

Testing Period. Governor Reynolds, through a provision within her Proclamations of Disaster Emergency, previously suspended the requirement of rule 655-3.4(4), which required nursing applicants to take NCLEX examination within ninety-one (91) days of receiving Board authorization to test. This Proclamation provision expired on May 27, 2021, and the rule is now back in effect. All applications that are received on or after May 28, 2021 will be subject to the 91-day period to take the NCLEX exam.

LICENSING PROVISIONS STILL IN EFFECT

License Renewals. Governor Reynolds temporarily suspended rules relating to continuing education and license renewal deadlines. Additionally, the legislature passed a bill during the 2020 legislative session, HF2627, which provides an extended grace period for licensees whose licenses expired in 2020.

Licenses that expired in 2020. Pursuant to HF2627, if your license expired in 2020 and you did not renew, you have until June 30, 2021 to complete your continuing education and renew your license. This is an extended grace period, meaning your license will not become inactive until July 1, 2021. However, please be advised that this extended grace period does not alter a nurse's renewal cycle. For example, if a nurse's license expired in August of 2020, and the nurse chooses to wait until June 30, 2021 to

renew, the nurse must still renew again in August of 2023. Further, this extended grace period does not apply to emergency licenses, which will still expire sixty (60) days after the termination or expiration of the Governor's Emergency Proclamation, or after receiving a failing score on the NCLEX or national certifying examination, whichever is sooner.

Licenses that expire during the Proclamation period. If your license expires between **January 1 and June 26, 2021**, you are not subject to the extended grace period in HF2627. However, Governor Reynolds has temporarily suspended license renewal deadlines through June 26, 2021. This means a nurse whose license expires during this Proclamation period may continue to work on the expired license. Nurses whose licenses expire during the Proclamation period and who do not choose to renew on time must submit their renewal applications within sixty (60) days of the expiration or termination of the Proclamation. Submission of a renewal application within sixty (60) days will be considered timely and will not result in the assessment of any late fees.

Licenses that expire after the Proclamation period. The suspension of licensing expiration provisions is only for the duration of the Proclamation, which is currently set to expire on June 26, 2021. Nurses whose licenses are due for renewal after the termination or expiration of the Proclamation period will still be required to submit their renewal materials pursuant to rule 3.7. Nurses who may experience undue hardship if required to comply with the terms of rule 3.7 after the end of Proclamation period should contact the Board for assistance.

Continuing Education. Governor Reynolds has temporarily suspended rules relating to continuing education deadlines or requirements as a condition of license renewal.

Licenses that expire during the Proclamation period. As discussed above, a nurse whose license expires during the Proclamation period has sixty (60) days from the end of the Proclamation to apply for renewal without incurring any late penalties. However, the Board of Nursing is operational at this time and will continue to process renewal applications as they are received. Accordingly, nurses may still apply to renew their licenses during this period. Nurses who renew their licenses during this Proclamation period will not be required to submit proof of completion of continuing education.

Licenses that expire after the Proclamation period. The suspension of continuing education requirements is only for the duration of the Proclamation, which is currently set to expire on **June 26, 2021**. Nurses whose licenses are due for renewal after the expiration or termination of the Proclamation will still be required to complete their continuing education requirements.

Simulation and Clinical Hours. Governor Reynolds temporarily suspended the requirement of rule 655-2.10(7)(a), which mandated that a simulation component not exceed 50% of total clinical hours in a nursing education course. Accordingly, nursing programs whose students have remaining clinical hours that cannot be completed within a facility due to a COVID-19 related hardship may complete the remaining hours using simulation activities, even if the simulation activities exceed 50% of the total clinical hours of the course. The Board strongly encourages programs to provide additional clinical opportunities for non-graduating students in the future to compensate for this period of increased virtual learning. The suspension of this rule is effective through **June 26, 2021**, unless the Governor terminates or extends the Proclamation.