

Steps on Becoming a Nurse in the United States

In order to obtain licensure as a nurse (RN or LPN/LVN) in the United States, it is important to note that licensure requirements differ from state to state. Therefore, be sure to contact the Board of Nursing in the state where you wish to practice in order to verify the respective and current licensure requirements. Please visit the web site of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (www.ncsbn.org) for a listing of each U.S. State Board of Nursing and licensing jurisdiction. Also keep in mind that endorsing (transferring) licensure to another state will also have different procedures depending on the respective state.

It is also necessary to obtain a visa in order to legally work in the U.S., whether that be a temporary or permanent visa; however, detailed information regarding visa application and policy should be obtained from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). You may wish to check out their web site at <http://uscis.gov/>.

CGFNS is an independent, not-for-profit and immigration-neutral organization committed to protecting the public by ensuring that foreign-educated healthcare professionals are eligible and qualified to meet licensure and other U.S. practice requirements. CGFNS is not a government organization, nor does it recruit international professionals for employment in the U.S.

The two main programs that CGFNS offers that are required by the majority of the U.S. Boards of Nursing in order to obtain registration/licensure as a nurse in the United States are the CGFNS Certification Program (CP) and the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES). A third program is geared specifically towards New York State and is called the CGFNS Credentials Verification Services (CVS) for New York State. The USCIS requires the VisaScreen™ certificate from CGFNS for healthcare professionals seeking an occupational visa in order to work in the U.S.

The CGFNS Certification Program (CP)

The CGFNS Certification Program (CP) is designed specifically for first-level general (Registered) nurses educated outside the United States who wish to pursue a career in the U.S. as registered nurses. The program is comprised of three parts: a credentials review of your nursing education, registration and licensure; the CGFNS Qualifying Exam testing nursing knowledge (offered four times a year in over 40 test sites worldwide); and an English language proficiency examination. In order to be eligible for the CGFNS Qualifying Exam, you must have completed a minimum number of hours of both classroom instruction and clinical practice in Adult Medical/Surgical Nursing, Maternal/Infant Nursing (Obstetrics), excluding Gynecology, Care of Children (Pediatrics), and Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing, excluding Neurology. If you have not completed any and/or an insufficient number of hours in each of the above areas, you will be ineligible to take the CGFNS Qualifying Exam until you complete an entire course (both theory and clinical) in the deficient area from a government-approved nursing school. You must also have been registered (1) as a first-level (Registered) nurse in your country of education, and (2) currently hold a registration/license as a Registered Nurse in some jurisdiction. Verification of both registrations must be sent to CGFNS directly from the licensing body(ies).

Applicants may select from the following three English Proficiency examinations to take as part of the Certification Program:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS)

– Passing Score: 540 (paper/pencil version) or 207 (computerized version)

Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS)

– Passing Score: 725

International English Language Testing System (IELTS), administered by IELTS International.

– Passing Score: 6.5 Overall (Academic Module)