



## Common State Policy Solutions to Support Health Professions Portability

“Portability” refers to the mobility potential of licensed/certified health professionals. Generally, states and territories seek portability policies to support recruitment of health care professionals and reduce administrative burdens associated with licensure for qualified health care professionals.

Instances when a state might desire portability policies:

- To support gainful employment of military personnel who move frequently
- Expedited deployment of health care professionals in the instance of a public health emergency
- To create an accessible regulatory environment that support health professions recruitment
- To enhance access to healthcare services through telehealth services

As states and territories are exploring portability policies, the below strategies may be explored:

### **License Reciprocity or Endorsement (Sometimes Known as “Licensure by Credential”)**

**What:** These policies enable a health professional with a license or certification from another state to become licensed or certified in a new state without going through the initial license application process. Endorsement is essentially a “stamp of approval” that validates the process of initial licensure that was completed by an external state’s licensing authority, but still requires the individual to become licensed within the state in order to practice within the state. License reciprocity or endorsement is a common regulatory policy within the health sector and many licensing entities have adopted these policies.

**Why:** Without active endorsement policies, health care professionals that are licensed in an external state would have to undergo the process of initial licensure, which generally includes submitting transcripts, validating completion of all training requirements (including educational programs, examinations, and experience if applicable). (Of note, there are some activities that are generally still completed in the cases of endorsement, including background checks, fingerprinting, etc.).

**Governors' Role:** Governors could call for license reciprocity or endorsement policies in executive legislative platforms or through legislative proposals.

**Example:** [California](#) has legislated provisions that enables dental hygienists with licenses in other states to become licensed in California if certain state-specific criteria are met (ex. Full review of qualifying education and examination, passage of a state jurisprudence examination, etc.).

## **Universal License Recognition**

**What:** Laws requiring licensing bodies to grant a license to a practitioner certified in another state, many times without the need for a full review of the individual's credentials.

**Why:** Instead of approaching licensing portability profession-by-profession, universal license recognition strategies generally provide reciprocity provisions for a broad swath of profession types.

**Governors' Role:** Governors could consider promoting universal license recognition policies to support portability for many professions.

### **Examples:**

- [Colorado](#) established the Occupational Credential Portability Program which enables out-of-state license holders to qualify for a Colorado license, with limited exceptions.
- Utah has language within the statute of their licensing agency related to recognition for licenses for all professions: "the division shall issue a license to a person who has been licensed in a state, district, or territory of the United States if: a) after being licensed outside of this state, the person has at least one year of experience in the state, district, or territory of the United States where the license was issued; b) the person's license is in good standing in the state, district, or territory of the United States where the license was issued; and c) the division determines that the license issued by the state, district, or territory of the United States encompasses a similar scope of practice as the license sought in this state." ([Utah Code 58-1-302 \(1\)](#)).

## **Model Laws and Rules**

**What:** Model laws and rules are standardized language which may include references to licensure entry requirements or portability. Model language has been developed for many professions, generally prepared by the professional association. Adoption of model laws and/or rules is generally less restrictive than adoption of a licensure compact, as it can be modified through legislative or rulemaking processes as opposed to through a compact oversight body.

**Why:** Adoption of model language supports uniformity of licensure or practice provisions.

**Governors' Role:** Licensing boards could explore whether model rules are available for the profession and, if desirable, pursue adoption of those policies through legislative packages or executive branch/licensing board rule promulgation.

**Example:** Model language exists for nurses as published in the National Council of State Boards of Nursing [Model Act](#).

## **Licensure Compacts**

**What:** Licensure compacts are formal agreements between states or territories that are enacted through legislation. Language that is adopted in a licensure compact is uniform across all compact participants and can only be modified through agreement between all participating states or territories (or a termination of participation). Licensure compacts generally follow a recognition model (whereby a compact-holder is offered a license or privilege to practice in another state, such is the case in the [Nurse Licensure Compact](#) and [Emergency Medical Services Compact](#)), or expedited licensure (made possible by uniform licensing requirements, such is the case in the [Interstate Medical Licensure Compact](#)).

**Why:** Licensure compacts are common state portability solutions, and have been rising in popularity for health related professions in recent years.

**Governors' Role:** All licensure compacts are structured differently and each have variations in which states or territories are participants. Governors can learn more about licensure compacts that relate to health care professions and determine which, if any, compacts would provide benefit and are feasible for their state. If desirable, governors could include compacts in a legislative platform or proposal.

**Examples:** There are numerous licensure compacts in health care, including:

- [Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Compact](#) (currently has two states that have enacted the legislation; not active until seven states have enacted legislation)
- [Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact](#)
- [Dentist & Dental Hygienist Compact](#) (in development)
- [Emergency Medical Services Compact](#)
- [Interstate Medical Licensure Compact](#)
- [Nurse Licensure Compact](#)
- [PT Compact](#)
- [PSYpact](#)

## **Resources**

- Policy Perspectives Options to Enhance Occupational License Portability. Federal Trade Commission. 2018. Available at:  
[https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/options-enhance-occupational-license-portability/license\\_portability\\_policy\\_paper\\_0.pdf](https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/options-enhance-occupational-license-portability/license_portability_policy_paper_0.pdf)
- National Center for Interstate Compacts. Council of State Governments. Available at:  
<https://compacts.csg.org/>
- 2021 Survey of Universal License Recognition Laws. National Center for Interstate Compacts, Occupational Licensure Project. 2021. Available at:  
[https://licensing.csg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021\\_ULR\\_Report.pdf](https://licensing.csg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021_ULR_Report.pdf)