

A New Graduate's Guide to Getting Licensed

AKA: Please rely on this document rather than "the word on the street."

The process of obtaining a license to practice nursing in the state of Oregon is neither perfunctory nor an example of bureaucratic paper work. Graduation from a program of nursing education and passing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) does not mean you will be automatically awarded a license. Oregon law (ORS 678.150 (5)) states that, "*The board shall determine the qualifications of applicants for a license to practice nursing in this state...*" In addition, in ORS 678.150 (6) (f), the board is legislatively required to "*examine, license, and renew the licenses of duly qualified applicants.*"

It is the Board of Nursing, not your education or test results, that ultimately determines if you will be awarded a license, and it is the Board who sets these determiners. All applicants must successfully meet all standards prior to the Board issuing you a license to practice.

A few important things to remember:

- (1) **The Board exists for the safety of the public, not to get you licensed in time to meet a deadline placed upon you by a potential employer.** While the Board understands the anxiety associated with obtaining a job after graduation, this is not our first priority. The Board will not license you until you have met all requirements. We do not recommend accepting a job before you are licensed.
- (2) **The Board does not expedite processing applications for any reason, such as a pending job offer.** All applications and incoming documents for applications must be reviewed in the order in which they are received. This is non-negotiable.
- (3) **Please do not contact Board staff to ask for a timeline or status of application processing.** Frequently calling or emailing the Board for the status of your application only pulls the licensing technicians away from processing applications and getting licenses issued. The same staff answering the phones and emails also process licenses.
- (4) **Do not ask for a timeline regarding approval of your application.** The time it takes to process applications is irregular and depends on the number of applications received at any given time. The Board's staff do not know how long the process will take since approval is based upon multiple factors. In all cases, the Board strives to issue licenses as quickly as possible.
- (5) **Do not use your school's email address (example: XXXX @ ohsu.edu) on your application.** This e-mail address is the Board's primary contact with applicants and licensees. Use your personal e-mail. Once the school 'turns off' your e-mail address when you graduate, the Board will have no way to contact you regarding any Board business.

It is your responsibility to update your contact information with the Board any time you move, change your name, change e-mail address, etc.

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Submitting the Application:

The Board will begin processing your application when it is determined that the application is fully completed and the correct fee has been submitted. Before you submit an application, make sure everything is complete and accurate. You may submit the application at any time but, generally, submit just before your anticipated graduation.

Disclosure Questions and Background Check:

It is required that you truthfully answer all of the disclosure questions on your application. Even if you have been advised by an attorney that you do not have to disclose or if your offense was as a juvenile, you should disclose. If information is found during your national and state fingerprint background check that was not disclosed on your application, your application will be placed in a background review process. This process could add a month or more to approval of your application. In some cases, the background information and/or disclosure are of such a nature that your application will be sent to an investigator. This may add several months to your approval and will only be resolved once the Board members receive the investigation information from Board staff and vote to either approve or deny your application. The approval of your application may come with restrictions based upon the information received by the Board. In Oregon, your only interaction will be with a Board investigator; you may not personally address the Board.

The Application Status Wizard:

The Application Status Wizard is the way for applicants to check on the status of their application processing. It is a reflection of the work of Board staff as they process your application and is only updated as the staff work through the process. Electronic submission of any document does not mean that the Application Status Wizard will immediately show receipt of the document. All documents have to be reviewed individually by a Board staff member. It is not until the staff approves and checks off that the document was received that the Application Status Wizard will indicate, "completed." Applicants will be contacted by Licensing staff if the application is incomplete, or does not meet Board standards. Do not contact the Board to check the status of a sent document. Please refer to the Application Status Wizard, located on the OSBN website.

Release to Test:

There are 43 RN/LPN preparation programs in Oregon and all of them graduate classes at approximately the same time. Getting through all applications is a manual, labor-intensive task. In addition to completing an approved RN associates or bachelor's degree program, or an LPN certificate within the previous three years, the following are the requirements that must be met prior to being released by the OSBN to take the NCLEX:

- The candidate has submitted a complete application and paid the fee.
- Confirmation of graduation or an official final transcript from the nursing school (only non-Oregon nursing graduates must supply a transcript) has been received and is acceptable.
- A Name Change Request form and legal documentation - if transcripts show a different name than on the application or if the applicant has a CNA in Oregon under a different name has been received and processed.
- The candidate has registered with Pearson VUE testing.

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Once all of the above parameters are met, the candidate will be released to test. When you are released to test, Board staff will send this information to Pearson VUE who will notify you that you have been released. They will send you an ATT code (authorization to test). You may then schedule your exam.

COVID-19 has impacted the availability of testing in Oregon due to capacity restrictions at the testing centers. Capacity restrictions are not under the control of the Oregon State Board of Nursing. You may be able to find NCLEX exam appointments in neighboring states as well. There are no “graduate nurse” licenses in Oregon. You must pass the NCLEX and be licensed prior to working as a nurse.

Exam Results:

Examination results are received daily by the Board, generally within the first business day or two after your examination has been reviewed by Pearson VUE. If you did not pass the exam, Board staff will notify you by emailing your test results, as well as a candidate performance report from Pearson VUE regarding your areas of strengths and areas that require improvement. You may retake the exam every 46 days. Before you can re-exam: You must apply for re-examination with the Board and re-register with Pearson VUE. The test result e-mail will include instructions on how to submit your exam retake application and how to re-register with Pearson VUE. You have three years following your graduation or program completion to pass the NCLEX.

If you pass the exam and meet all other Board qualifications, you will be issued a license. The only notification you will receive will be an e-mail from the Board with your license number. Oregon does not issue a physical license. You and your employer can access the verification webpage at www.oregon.gov/osbn.

Length of Time Initial Licensure Is Valid:

License expiration is determined based upon your birthdate and numerical sequence of the year you were born. If you were born in an odd year, your license will expire at 12:01 am on the day of your birthday in an odd year, and at 12:01 am on your birthday in an even year if you were born in an even year. It is your responsibility to renew your license on time. The Board will send you renewal notifications beginning 90 days before your license expiration; however, not receiving this notification is not a reason for not renewing on time. These notifications are a courtesy. Please also note that the expiration is at 12:01 am on your birthday. So, if you wait until the day of your birthday to renew, it will be too late and you will pay a \$100 penalty fee for any application received after 12:01am on your birthday.

Because of this process of determining expiration dates, your initial license may expire in as little as 6 months or in as many as 30 months, depending on the date you were licensed and your next qualifying birthdate. License fees are not pro-rated; you will pay the same renewal fee if your license is 6 months old or 30 months. The license expiration process is set by the Oregon legislature and not under the control of the Board nor Board staff.