

Qualifications for licensure in Iowa:

1. Graduate from a board-approved RN nursing program.
2. Prior to issuing the license, any past felony convictions, or record of prior disciplinary action, regardless of jurisdiction, must be reviewed and approved by the board.
3. Passing the NCLEX examination as prescribed by the board.

Nurse Licensure Compact Information:

If you reside in a state that is a member of the Nurse Licensure Compact Agreement, which includes Iowa, you MUST apply for licensure in your primary state of residence. Primary state of residence is defined as where you hold a driver's license, vote, and pay taxes. You can view the list of compact states at the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. by going to the Nurse Licensure Compact link: <https://www.ncsbn.org/compacts.html>. A fact sheet and resources regarding the NLC link: <https://www.ncsbn.org/compacts/nurse-licensure-compact/nlc-toolkit/nlc-fact-sheets.page>.

The compact does not supersede federal law. Military and federal employees may apply for licensure by examination in Iowa regardless of their primary state of residence.

Steps for nursing licensure in Iowa:

1. A completed application.
 - a. Online – go to the IBON website at <https://nursing.iowa.gov>, and follow the links to IBON online services. The link to the exam application is in the main menu on the Online Services page.
2. Pay the fee of \$143, which includes the fee to conduct the criminal history background check. Important: the fee is non-refundable.
3. Submit two fingerprint cards, criminal history background waiver form, and all criminal history documentation.
 - a. Information regarding any criminal convictions and out of state discipline must be submitted. All criminal convictions must be reported. Deferred judgements, expunged convictions, sealed records, and other forms of agreed dispositions must still be reported. Traffic charges do not need to be reported but operating while intoxicated convictions MUST be reported.
4. Complete the NCLEX registration and pay the non-refundable fee of \$200 by one of the following methods:
 - a. Go online to www.pearsonvue.com/nclex then select register using your first, middle and last name
 - b. Call 1-(866) 496-2539 (M-F from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. CST)
5. Submit an official nursing transcript. Transcripts must be sent hard copy by ground mail and directly from the program. Transcripts received by any other method will not be accepted. Transcripts must show the date of graduation and degree conferred.

Information regarding criminal conviction:

Individuals with criminal histories are not automatically prohibited from obtaining a nursing license in Iowa. A prior criminal offense is only disqualifying if (1) the actions taken in furtherance of the offense are customarily performed within the scope of practice of nursing, or

(2) the circumstances under which the offense was committed are circumstances customary to nursing. Additionally, even if you have one or more potentially disqualifying convictions, you are entitled to submit proof of rehabilitation to the Board to demonstrate your current fitness to safely practice nursing.

If you are considering applying for a nursing license and have not yet submitted a completed application, you have the option of asking the Board to determine whether one or more of your criminal convictions would render you ineligible for an LPN, RN, or ARNP license. This request is called a “petition for eligibility determination,” and the form and instructions for submitting the petition can be found here: [Eligibility Petition Form & Instructions](#)

Prospective applicants with criminal convictions are not required to submit a petition for eligibility determination before applying for a license. **If you are already well into a nurse program or close to graduating it is worth considering whether this is necessary.** Applicants can also choose to disclose their convictions on their application for licensure, and include with their application (1) the criminal complaint and judgment of conviction for each separate offense, (2) a brief personal statement about the conditions that led to the convictions, and (3) all evidence of rehabilitation they wish the board to consider.

Pursuant to Iowa Code section 272C.15(2), the Board has provided a list of specific convictions that could, under certain circumstances, disqualify an applicant from receiving a license. That list can be found here: [List of Potentially Disqualifying Criminal Convictions](#)

Continuing Education (CE) for registered nurses in Iowa:

Nurses must complete nursing CE with the license renewal period. The time frame when a licensee may take CE coursework to count toward license renewal begins the 16th of the birth month and runs until the nurse renews their license for the next renewal period. Licensee should plan to renew 30-60 days prior to the expiration date. When a nurse prepares to renew their license, CE requirements must be completed, and documentation should be in hand. Nurses need to keep documentation about their CE activities for four (4) years.

- For renewal or reactivation of all licenses, the requirement is 36 contact hours of continuing education
- A license issued for less than three years is granted for two years, plus the number of months to the birth month, thereafter, the license must be renewed every three years.

Special Testing Circumstances:

Pursuant to 655 Iowa Administrative Code, Nursing Board, individuals with disabilities may request special testing accommodations. Inquiries should be directed to the Iowa Board of Nursing as early as possible, preferably prior to graduation, in order to expedite the approval process.

Please refer to the [NCLEX Accommodations](#) page for detailed information. You may phone (515) 281-3255 or e-mail ibon@iowa.gov for additional information.