

IDAHO BOARD OF NURSING PHILOSOPHY REGARDING LICENSURE

Introduction

Licensure is a process by which permission is granted to an individual who meets certain predetermined standards, the legal right to practice a health profession and/or to use a specified title. The primary goal of licensure is to protect the public by establishing minimum standards which qualified practitioners must meet.

In Idaho, the Board of Nursing is granted statutory authority to establish standards, criteria, conditions and requirements and to determine eligibility for nurse licensure. In fulfilling its mission to protect the public, the Board has adopted standards to accomplish the primary goal of licensure in the least restrictive manner.

Criteria for licensure are defined in administrative rules and are, for the most part, consistent with "Uniform Core Licensure Requirements" (referred to as uniform requirements) adopted by the 1999 National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Delegate Assembly.

Uniform requirements enhance interstate mobility of licensed nurses and decrease artificial barriers to access during nurse shortage periods. Further, they diminish concerns over disparate qualifications for licensure between the various states. However, not all jurisdictions have adopted the uniform requirements.

Initial Licensure by Examination

The Board of Nursing has established standards for initial licensure that assure nurses licensed in Idaho:

- ◆ Have acquired the basic knowledge, skills and abilities to safely practice; and
- ◆ Provide validation of competence in basic knowledge, skills and abilities; and
- ◆ Possess the functional abilities to perform the essential role of the nurse.

Board requirements for initial licensure assure that individuals who are granted the authority to practice nursing demonstrate specified educational, examination and behavioral requirements. These requirements for initial licensure are consistent with the uniform requirements and are essential for Idaho participation in the Nurse Licensure Compact. The Board is committed to application of the uniform requirements in its decisions related to initial licensure.

Licensure by Interstate Endorsement

Decisions regarding licensure by interstate endorsement are based primarily on criteria upon which the original state of licensure determined eligibility for initial licensure and their consistency with criteria for initial licensure in Idaho. However, the Board recognizes that assessing competence for purposes of initial licensure is different from assessing the continued competence of experienced nurses.

Factors that contribute to the maintenance and continued development of the abilities necessary for the safe, effective practice of nursing have been identified to include basic professional education for initial licensure, to be followed by:

- ◆ Professional work experience;
- ◆ Continuing education;
- ◆ Informal education from mentors and preceptors;
- ◆ Self-study; and
- ◆ Other experiences and activities that may have had a part in building professional abilities throughout the nurse's professional career.

Experienced nurses consider work experience to be the greatest contributor to their current levels of ability**.

Consideration of licensure based on other than the uniform requirements does not necessarily mean that established standards of competence will have been compromised. Where another jurisdiction has granted initial licensure based on a determination of achievement and demonstration of initial competence other than through application of uniform requirements, in an appropriate case, the nurse should be considered for licensure endorsement in Idaho.

Conclusion

The Idaho Board of Nursing is committed to application of uniform requirements in making nurse licensure decisions. However, the Board believes that under certain unique circumstances nurse competence can be determined outside of the usual processes and criteria. The Board acknowledges that blind adherence to uniform requirements may not always be in the public's best interest.

When, under appropriate scrutiny, the primary goal of licensure has been adequately demonstrated, an acceptable exception to defined criteria may be warranted, thereby authorizing otherwise qualified nurses to be licensed to practice in Idaho.

** ("Report of Findings: Exploring the Value of Continuing Education Mandates", NCSBN, 2003)

Adopted by the Board of Nursing 5/02/08