March 20, 2020

Pennsylvania Waives Some Nurse Licensing Requirements During Coronavirus Emergency

In order to increase the number of health care practitioners available to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and to ensure continuity of patient care and services, Governor Wolf has granted the Department of State's request to suspend some nursing licensing and regulatory requirements under the State Board of Nursing.

For all licensing-related inquiries, please use the email addresses found here: Board Contact Info

Practice Permits and Fees:
To allow nurses with temporary practice permits and nursing school graduates with graduate permits to continue practicing during the COVID-19 pandemic disaster emergency, the Department requested suspension of certain requirements to allow all temporary permits to be extended and all fees associated with said extensions waived:

- Requirements which restrict temporary practice permits and graduate permits to a term of one year is suspended.
- For Registered Nurses, requirements to apply for an extension of an RN graduate permit or temporary permit, including any related fees and time-frames for extensions of temporary permits, are waived.
- For Practical Nurses, requirements to apply for an extension of an PN graduate permit or temporary permit, including any related fees and time-frames for extensions of temporary permits, are waived.
- All temporary and graduate permits that would normally expire during the next 90 days will be automatically extended for an additional 90 days.

Certified Registered Nurse Practitioners (CRNPs)
The Department also requested suspension of certain requirements for CRNPs as follows:

- For CRNPs to practice to their full capabilities and assist in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the restrictions requiring a CRNP practice within a specific clinical specialty are suspended.
- Restrictions which prohibit CRNPs from prescribing drugs outside of the established formulary are suspended.
- In the event that Board-recognized national CRNP certification examinations become unavailable during the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement that CRNPs hold national certification in a particular specialty will be suspended during the declared emergency.

- For applicants for certification as a CRNP by endorsement, the educational equivalence is suspended for active licensees of other states who hold Board-recognized national certification.

CRNP Prescriptive Authority Collaborative Agreements

The Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (BPOA) and the State Board of Nursing are authorized to suspend certain administrative requirements as follows:

- On an initial application for prescriptive authority, the State Board of Nursing will require only one collaborative physician and one substitute physician.
- During the emergency period, for changes to an existing prescriptive authority collaborative agreement (PACA), the Board of Nursing will suspend Board pre-approval requirements for the following:
    - Deletion or addition of drug categories
    - Change of controlled substances
    - Deletion or addition of substitute physicians
    - Changes to the circumstances and how often the collaborating physician will personally see the patient
    - Termination of the PACA
- For an additional prescriptive authority authorization, if a CRNP has one active Pennsylvania prescriptive authority with a physician, the CRNP, upon application, will be permitted to practice with a new collaborating physician for up to 6 months provided the CRNP and the new collaborating physician hold current unrestricted licenses.

License Expiration Extension:

To ensure RNs, CRNPs and CNSs will be able to continue to provide assistance uninterrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, for licensees who are currently “in renewal” and set to expire on April 30, 2020, all licenses and certificates will be extended for an additional three months, until July 31, 2020.

Nursing School Graduates:

Nursing school graduates who have been issued “Authorizations to Test” by the Board, who have been unable to sit for the licensure examinations due to cancellation of the examinations because of COVID-19, and who do not already have a graduate permit may immediately apply for a graduate permit to allow them to assist in the pandemic response. The graduate permit authorizes the graduate nurses to practice under supervision of a registered nurse. Supervision requires that a registered nurse is physically present in the area or unit where the graduate nurse is practicing. The permits expire if the graduate permit holder fails the examination.