



Navigating the Path to get a Colorado Nursing License as an Undocumented Professional

Becoming a registered nurse in Colorado is a rewarding journey that involves multiple steps. Currently, undocumented professionals may face several barriers when completing their licensing requirements. This infographic outlines the essential requirements and potential barriers undocumented professionals may face when finalizing a registered nursing license in the state of Colorado.

Nursing Accreditation and Licensing Timeline

Here is a general overview of the requirements to get a nursing license in Colorado for first time nursing professionals. For professionals who have an international nursing degree, please see the International Accreditation Infographic for more information.

Acquiring a Nursing Degree and Accreditation

Before starting the licensing process, you must have a nursing degree from an accredited institution. Nursing programs in Colorado take between 1 and 4 years to complete. All nursing programs require the completion of clinical hours before graduating.

🚩 **There may be obstacles in meeting background check requirements for clinical hours.**

🚩 **Some programs may ask for up to date vaccinations.**

🚩 **Most nursing programs are only offered in English**

Passing the NCLEX Exam

After completing your nursing education, you must pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN).

The NCLEX-RN is a computerized exam that assesses your ability to apply nursing principles and knowledge to real-world scenarios. To be eligible to take the NCLEX-RN, you need to register with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and obtain an Authorization to Test (ATT) from the Colorado Board of Nursing.

🚩 **NCLEX is only available in English**

Applying for Colorado Nursing License

Once you pass the NCLEX-RN exam, you can submit your application for a Colorado nursing license through the Colorado Board of Nursing housed under the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA). The DORA website provides detailed instructions and application forms. Your application should include personal information, educational background, NCLEX-RN exam results, and other required documents.

🚩 **All information must be submitted in English**

Background Check and Fingerprinting

To get your licensure, you must submit fingerprints for processing by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for the purpose of conducting a state and national fingerprint-based criminal history record check using CBI and FBI records. Identigo or American Bioidentity can be used for this process.

✅ **No current barriers**

Nursing Accreditation and Licensing Timeline

Verification through the Colorado Board of Nursing

Once your application, background check, and fingerprints are processed, the Colorado Board of Nursing will verify your nursing license. This involves confirming your education, NCLEX-RN exam results, and any other credentials submitted with your application. If everything checks out, the CBN will issue your official Colorado nursing license.

 **No current barriers**

Continuing Education and Renewal Process

To maintain your Colorado nursing license, you must participate in continuing education (CE) and renew your license every two years. To renew your license, you will need to submit the required CE documentation and pay the renewal fee.

 **All information must be submitted in English**

Additional Certifications and Specializations

While a basic nursing license allows you to practice as a registered nurse, you might consider pursuing additional certifications or specializations. These certifications can enhance your skills, knowledge, and marketability within the nursing profession. Some common nursing specializations include critical care nursing, pediatric nursing, and emergency nursing.

 **Most nursing programs are only offered in English**

Recent Advancements in Colorado to For Undocumented Professionals

Remove Barriers To Certain Public Opportunities

The bill removes language from Colorado statutes that previously restricted access to state and local benefits for people without lawful immigration status. This includes professional and occupational licenses issued by state agencies.

It allows individuals to use forms of identification other than state-issued IDs (such as consular IDs or foreign passports) to prove their identity when applying for licenses or services.

Removal of Lawful Presence Verification

The bill removes the requirement for people to provide proof of lawful presence (such as U.S. citizenship, a green card, or visa status) when applying for professional and occupational licenses in Colorado. This makes it possible for undocumented immigrants to obtain licenses in fields like healthcare, education, and other regulated professions.

Colorado Application for State Financial Aid

CASFA is a financial aid application designed for students in Colorado who are not eligible to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to their immigration status. This includes **undocumented students, DACA recipients, asylum seekers**, and others who do not have lawful status but meet the qualifications for in-state tuition under Colorado law.

Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact

SB18-027, also known as the **Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (eNLC)**, was a bill passed in Colorado in 2018 to allow the state to join the **eNLC**, which is a multi-state agreement that permits registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical/vocational nurses (LPNs/LVNs) to practice in other compact states without needing separate licenses for each state.

Existing Barriers for Undocumented Professionals

1

Financial Aid

While undocumented Colorado residents are eligible for for CASFA and some grants, these assistance measures rarely cover the full need to attend a 2 or 4 year university. Undocumented students are not eligible for federal student loans or aid. As a result, undocumented students are left with a large student bill that they are unable to pay.

2

Background Checks and the requirement of a SSN

Accrediting institutions and hospital systems use different agencies to complete the background check necessary for clinical hours. In many cases, a social security number is required to complete a background check even though it is not required by law. Undocumented students who are unable to complete this background check may not be able to finish their nursing degree.

3

Language Barriers

Most accreditation programs, the NCLEX and the DORA website are currently only available in English. Non-English speakers may not be able to access the resources necessary to obtain a nursing license in Colorado.

4

Employment

While SB21-77 and SB21-199 removed the requirement of a Social Security Number for professional licenses, a social security number is still required to be employed in the United States. While individuals with an ITIN can work as independent contractors, there are fewer opportunities to do so in healthcare.

Juntos Community

1

Vision

Over the next decade, Juntos will help undocumented immigrants access upward economic mobility by aiding the community with the pathways, knowledge, and skills to obtain high-quality careers, purchase their first home, and build generational wealth.

2

Mission

Committed to helping undocumented immigrants overcome barriers to workforce access and career mobility, Juntos empowers our community with DACA support, educational workshops, and increased awareness around systemic challenges so that they can confidently thrive in their chosen careers.

3

Goal

Through advocacy, implementation, and community support, Juntos plans to make connections with legislators, higher education institutions, and hospital systems to expand professional healthcare licenses to include undocumented professionals.