



Seeking Employment in the US: An Overview for Foreign Nurses

Lack of Temporary Work Visas for Nurses

Unfortunately, there are limited options for temporary employment authorization in the United States for Registered Nurses. If you have a job offer for a position which is one that normally requires a Bachelor's degree, you may be eligible for **H-1B** status. However, most Registered Nurse jobs in the United States do not require a Bachelor's degree.

If you are a citizen of Canada or Mexico, you may qualify for a **TN** work permit. The TN is valid for one year at a time, and may be renewed indefinitely. To qualify for a TN, you must have at least a temporary nursing license from the state of intended employment.

The Permanent Residence Process

Because of the lack of temporary options for nurses, it is often necessary to apply directly for permanent residence. This process involves two steps: 1) filing the Immigrant Visa Petition at the INS in the United States, and 2) applying for an immigrant Visa at a U.S. consulate at your home country after the visa petition is approved or filing an application for Adjustment of Status with the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Obtaining an Approved Immigrant Visa Petition

In order to obtain an approved immigrant visa petition, you must either have 1) a CGFNS Certificate, or 2) a full and unrestricted nursing license from the state of intended employment. The NCLEX licensing exam is offered only in Canada and the United States. Therefore, if it is not possible for you to travel to Canada or the US (including Guam and Saipan) for this exam, it will be necessary for you to obtain the CGFNS Certificate.

CGFNS Certificate

The CGFNS Certificate involves 1) credentials review of the nurse's education, registration and licensure; 2) the CGFNS Qualifying Exam, a one-day qualifying exam testing nursing knowledge; and 3) an English language proficiency exam (TOEFL). Upon successful completion of all three elements of the program, the applicant is awarded a CGFNS Certificate.

How to apply for a CGFNS certificate?

Go to <http://www.cgfns.org/cgfns/index.html>, click on the "Programs" link and then on the "On-line applications" and download the Certification Program Handbook and the Certification Program Application Packet. If you cannot download these forms, you may also request an application by sending an e-mail request to Support@cgfns.org or sending a fax to (215) 349-0026



When & where is the CGFNS exam held?

The CGFNS (Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools) Qualifying Exam of nursing knowledge is offered three times a year at more than 40 locations worldwide. For more information, go to <http://www.cgfns.org/cgfns/index.html>. We suggest that you submit your application to CGFNS approximately 8 weeks before the application deadline.

State Licensure

If you are in the United States, you may apply for state licensure by exam. You must first submit an application for licensure to the board of registered nursing in the state of intended employment. For example, in Pennsylvania, you may download the license application and instructions from the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing's Web site at <http://www.dos.state.pa.us/bpoa/nurbd/licensureinfo.htm>

VisaScreen™

When you apply for your immigrant visa at the US consulate, or for Adjustment of Status, it will be necessary for you to present a VisaScreen™ Certificate. We suggest that you begin the process of obtaining your VisaScreen™ Certificate as soon as possible. You may download the VisaScreen™ Certificate from the CGFNS website at www.cgfns.org. (click on "programs" and then on "visa screen.")

English Language Exam

The applicant must pass a written and oral test administered by either the Educational Testing Service (ETS), which gives the TOEFL Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam, or the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB).

To schedule your English Language test, please contact either:

Educational Testing Services (ETS) for TOEFL/TSE Tel: 609-771-7100;
<http://www.toefl.org>; **or**

the English Language Institute (ELI) for MELAB Testing: Tel: 734-763-3452 or 734-764-2416; <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/melab.htm>

The applicant must obtain the following scores:

TOEFL: Paper-Based: 540; Computer-Based: 207; **TWE:** 4.0; **TSE:** 50

MELAB: Final Score: 79; Oral Interview: 3+