



Commission on  
Graduates of  
Foreign Nursing  
Schools



International  
Commission on  
Healthcare  
Professions

## Steps on Becoming a Nurse in the United States

In order to obtain licensure as a nurse (RN or LPN/LVN) in the United States, it is important to note that licensure requirements differ from state to state. Therefore, be sure to contact the Board of Nursing in the state where you wish to practice in order to verify the respective and current licensure requirements. A contact list of all the U.S. State Boards of Nursing is included in your Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) application materials for your reference. Also keep in mind that endorsing (transferring) licensure to another state will also have different procedures depending on the respective state.

It is also necessary to obtain a visa in order to legally work in the U.S., whether that is a temporary or permanent visa; however, detailed information regarding visa application and policy should be obtained from INS. You may wish to check out their web site at <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/>.

CGFNS is an independent, not-for-profit and immigration-neutral organization committed to protecting the public by ensuring that foreign-educated healthcare professionals are eligible and qualified to meet licensure and other U.S. practice requirements. CGFNS is not a government organization, nor does it recruit international professionals for employment in the U.S. The two main programs that CGFNS offers that are required by the majority of the U.S. Boards of Nursing in order to obtain registration/licensure as a nurse in the United States are the CGFNS Certification Program (CP) and the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES). INS requires the *VisaScreen* certificate from CGFNS for healthcare professionals seeking permanent occupational visas in order to work in the U.S.

### **The CGFNS Certification Program (CP)**

The CGFNS Certification Program (CP) is designed specifically for first-level general (Registered) nurses educated outside the United States who wish to pursue a career in the U.S. as registered nurses. The program is comprised of three parts: a credentials review of your nursing education, registration and licensure; the CGFNS Qualifying Exam testing nursing knowledge (offered three times a year in over 40 test sites worldwide); and an English language proficiency examination. In order to be eligible for the CGFNS Qualifying Examination, you must have completed a minimum number of hours of **both** classroom instruction **and** clinical practice in **Adult Medical/Surgical Nursing, Maternal/Infant Nursing (Obstetrics), excluding Gynecology, Care of Children (Pediatrics), and Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing, excluding Neurology**. If you have not completed any and/or a sufficient number of hours in each of the above areas, you will be ineligible to take the CGFNS Qualifying Examination until you complete an entire course (both theory and clinical) in the deficient area from a government-approved nursing school. You must also have been registered (1) as a first-level (Registered) nurse in your country of education, and (2) currently hold a registration/license as a Registered Nurse in some jurisdiction, and verification of both registrations must be sent to CGFNS directly from the licensing body(ies).

The English proficiency examination is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and is administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), to which you must apply directly in order to schedule an examination date. You may contact ETS by writing to: Educational Testing Service (ETS), PO Box 6151, Princeton, New Jersey 08541-6151. You may also call ETS at (609) 771-7100, or visit their website at [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org). The minimum passing score for the TOEFL examination is **540** (*paper and pencil version*) **or** **207** (*computerized version*); that score must also be forwarded from ETS directly to CGFNS. All English language proficiency scores are valid for up to two years from the date of administration. Passing scores on both the CGFNS Qualifying Examination and the TOEFL examination must be attained within two years of each other in order for both scores to be accepted as successful completion of the Certification Program. After successfully completing all three parts of the Certification Program, an applicant is awarded a CGFNS Certificate.

### **The Credentials Evaluation Service (CES)**

The CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) is a report prepared by CGFNS for a Board of Nursing, university, immigration office, employer, etc. This report analyzes the education and licensure earned outside of the United States in terms of how it compares with U.S. standards and expectations. There is no examination included in this program; once all documentation, fees and a completed application are received, a report will be prepared and submitted to the recipient (i.e., Board of Nursing, U.S. college/university [if applying for academic admission], an employer, etc.) as well as a copy to you, at which time the Board will determine whether or not you are eligible to take the national licensing examination for nurses

in the United States--the NCLEX-RN® or NCLEX-PN® examination--which is required for all nurses in order to practice in the U.S.

**The ICHP VisaScreen: Visa Credentials Assessment**

If you are also interested in obtaining permanent residency in the United States as a registered or licensed practical/vocational nurse (i.e. obtain a "Green Card"), you are also required, by virtue of the 1996 immigration laws, to obtain a VisaScreen certificate. The VisaScreen Certificate is issued after a complete evaluation of a professional’s credentials to verify that he or she meets the minimum federal requirements. The Certificate must be received before INS will issue an occupational visa to the applicant to live and work as a professional in their field in the U.S. The International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP), a division of CGFNS, administers this screening process, which is called the "VisaScreen: Visa Credentials Assessment". The VisaScreen program is comprised of three parts: a credentials review of your entire nursing education (educational requirements same as those for the Certification Program) and all registration/licensure that you have held and currently hold, successful completion of either the CGFNS Certification Program or the NCLEX-RN® (for registered nurses) or the NCLEX-PN® (for LPNs/LVNs), and successful completion of a group of English language proficiency examinations. Either the TOEFL, TWE and TSE administered by ETS, OR the MELAB and MELAB (oral) administered by the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) will qualify. Passing scores for these examinations are as follows:

Passing English Language Proficiency Examination Scores						
Healthcare Profession	TOEFL	TWE	TSE	OR	MELAB	MELAB
	<i>(Test of English as a Foreign Language)</i>	<i>(Test of Written English)</i>	<i>(Test of Spoken English)</i>		<i>(Michigan English Language Assessment Battery)</i>	<i>(Oral Interview)</i>
Registered Nurse	540 (207)	4.0	50		79	3+
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse	530 (197)	4.0	50		77	3+

Upon successful completion of all parts of the VisaScreen Program, you will obtain the *VisaScreen* Certificate, which you must present to INS at your final consular interview.

**Documents required for any CGFNS Program**

In order for CGFNS to complete an evaluation of your credentials for CP, CES or VisaScreen, the following documents are required:

- A completed application form and full payment for the program/service to which you are applying. You can obtain application forms for any of our services by contacting our Customer Service Department by:
  - **Telephone: (215) 349-8767**, Monday-Thursday 9:00AM--5:00PM, & Fridays 9:00AM--4:30PM (ET)
  - **Fax: (215) 349-0026**
  - **Email: [support@cgfns.org](mailto:support@cgfns.org)**
- A FULL transcript (or, in the case of the Certification Program, a completed “Nursing Education Form”), with an official school seal/stamp, mailed to CGFNS directly from your nursing school, verifying the total number of hours of classroom instruction (theory) and hours/days of clinical practice you completed in each of the courses you completed during your professional training/nursing program. Work experience CAN NOT be accepted as an alternative to lack of instruction/training undertaken during your educational program.
- A validation of your original registration/license as a nurse mailed to CGFNS directly from the authority which issues registrations/licensure in your original country of education (if applicable).
- A validation from any other licensing authority where you hold a license as a registered and/or practical nurse (*if applicable*).
- A photocopy of your secondary school diploma (high school); OR, if you no longer have your original diploma, an official letter with the school seal/stamp and signed by the principal, sent to CGFNS directly from your secondary school verifying your full dates of attendance and date of completion/graduation.

All documentation must be sent to CGFNS via mail/courier; CGFNS will not accept any official documentation sent either by fax or email. Our mailing address is:

**Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)**  
**3600 Market Street, Suite 400**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-2651 (USA)**

And be sure to visit our website at [www.cgfns.org](http://www.cgfns.org) for further information and updates

***PLEASE NOTE:*** Successful completion of any CGFNS program does not in any way guarantee that you will be granted registration/licensure, academic admission, employment, etc. in the United States. It is the jurisdiction of the particular Board of Nursing, academic institution, employer, etc. to which you are applying as to whether or not your application will be accepted and registration, employment or admission will be granted.