

Guide to Complete the Steps for Foreign-Trained Nurses to Obtain the Maryland Registered Nurse (RN) License

Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services

Suburban Maryland Welcome Back Center

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended for foreign-trained nurses who are interested in obtaining the Maryland Registered Nurse (RN) license to practice in the State of Maryland. The guide includes valuable information and important tips drawn upon the experience through the *Suburban Maryland Welcome Back Center of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services* to help foreign-trained nurses to complete the steps to obtain the RN license in Maryland.

The Maryland Board of Nursing is the registration authority that provides the RN license and establishes the following **requirements** to obtain the RN license in Maryland:

- Completing the credentialing review — Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) through the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)
- Passing the **Oral English Test**
- Passing the **nursing board examination** (National Council of Licensure Exam, NCLEX-RN)

This guide was prepared using the information obtained from:

- The website of the Maryland Board of Nursing as well as the handout with instructions included in the application packet for Maryland licensure by examination for nurses trained outside the United States,
- The Credentials Evaluation Service Applicant Instructions Handbook from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), and
- The NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin and the handout with the eight steps of the NCLEX Examination Process.

Each State may have different requirements to obtain the RN license. This guide provides detailed information on how to complete the steps for foreign-trained nurses to obtain the RN license in the State of Maryland. The steps are presented in the chronological order to be completed.

It is important to keep in mind that the foreign-trained nurse could start the credentialing review and preparing to pass the oral English test at the same time. However, the foreign-trained nurse must complete the Credentials Evaluation Services and pass one of the Oral English Test prior to receive the authorization to test (ATT) to be eligible to take the nursing board exam (NCLEX-RN).

SUMMARY OF STEPS

Please take the following 6 steps to receive your Maryland Registered Nurse (RN) Active License if you are a nurse trained outside the United States.

STEP 1: Request to the Maryland Board of Nursing the application packet for licensure by examination for nurses trained outside the United States

STEP 2: Complete the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) request through the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) following sub-steps 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3:

Sub-step 2.1: Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form for CES

Sub-step 2.2: Request for Validation of License/Registration/Diploma Form for CES

Sub-step 2.3: Submit Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) Online Application (Fee \$335)

STEP 3: Pass an Oral English Test (Fee varies from \$125 to \$185)

STEP 4: Complete and submit the application to the Maryland Board of Nursing (Fee \$100) including the Criminal History Background Check (Fee approximately \$60)

STEP 5: Pass the National Council of Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN) (Fee \$200)

STEP 6: Change an Inactive License to an Active License

Note: Please remember that the amounts indicated for the fees are subject to change. Therefore, before submitting the application you must verify the exact amount with the corresponding institution to make sure that you send the adequate fees with the required applications and forms.

STEP 1:

Request to the Maryland Board of Nursing the application packet for licensure by examination for nurses trained outside the United States

Note: Do not submit the application to the Maryland Board of Nursing until step 2 and 3 have been completed.

Call the Maryland Board of Nursing at (410) 585-1929 to request that the application packet for Maryland licensure by examination for nurses trained outside the United States be mailed to you. If you get a voicemail message, leave your name, address, and telephone number.

The application packet for Maryland licensure by examination for nurses trained outside the United States contains:

- A handout with instructions including:
 - Information on the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) Application Instructions Handbook from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) (see Step 2)
 - Information regarding the Application for the Oral English Test, for example ILA-OPI, TOEFL-iBT and IELTS (see Step 3)
- Frequently Asked Questions about the ILA-OPI and the ILA-OPI registration form.
- The Maryland Board of Nursing Application form and documents with instructions regarding the fingerprints required for the Criminal History Background Check (see Step 4)
- An NCLEX Candidate Bulletin (see Step 5)

Once you receive the application packet, read it carefully so that you can become familiar with its contents. The more you understand the process and the requirements, the easier it may be for you to complete the forms and successfully complete each of the steps in the process to obtain your registered nurse (RN) licensure.

STEP 2:

Complete the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) request through the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)

Visit www.cgfns.org to download the Credentials Evaluation Service Application Instructions Handbook by following the next steps:

- Click on **Forms and Fees**
- Click on **Applications**
- Under Credentials Evaluation Service and other forms, click on **Credentials Evaluation Service Application Instructions**

Completing the request for the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) to the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) involves three sub-steps: 1. Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form, 2. Request for Validation of License/Registration/Diploma Form, and 3. Submit Credentials Evaluation Service Online Application.

Once the CGFNS has received the CES online application, the academic records/transcripts form, and the validation of license/registration/diploma form, it will complete the CES report. The applicant must indicate that the Maryland Board of Nursing is the CES report recipient so that an electronic copy of the CES report will be sent to the Maryland Board of Nursing.

Note: Do not submit the CES application (Sub-step 2.3) to the CGFNS until sub-step 2.1 and 2.2 have been completed and the institution(s) in the country where you obtained your nursing degree and license are ready to submit the documents to the CGFNS. Submit the CES online application at least two days prior to the estimated date of arrival of documents to the CGFNS.

Sub-step 2.1: Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form for CES

- A. Complete the form for the Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form for CES and send it to the academic institution (where you obtained your nursing degree). Please note that the top portion of the form is filled out by the applicant and the bottom portion by the academic institution. This form can be downloaded at www.cgfns.org by following the next steps:
 - Click on Forms and Fees
 - Click on Forms
 - Under Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form, click on NURSE Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form (May 2011)
- B. Request to the academic institution to send the form directly to:
Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)
Attention: Credentials Evaluation Service (CES)
3600 Market Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651
USA

Please note that in addition to the *Request for Academic Records/Transcripts Form*, the academic institution must include the following documents:

- Official transcripts detailing all the nursing courses you took each year at the academic institution including transcripts hours and transcripts grades.

Note: The CGFNS credentialing review assess if the applicant graduated from an approved school of nursing, substantially equivalent to Maryland programs and offering a program of correlated theory and clinical practice in Medical, Surgical, Obstetric, Pediatric, Gerontology, and Psychiatric Nursing.

- Copy of the diploma of your nursing degree
- Copy of the Secondary education diploma
- Certified English translation of the above documents if needed

Sub-step 2.2: Request for Validation of License/Registration/Diploma Form for CES

- A. Complete the form for the Request for Validation of License/Registration/Diploma Form for CES and send it to the **registration authority** (where your nursing license was issued for the first time). Please note that the top portion of the form is filled out by the applicant and the bottom portion by the registration authority. This form can be downloaded at www.cgfns.org by following the steps listed below:

- Click on Forms and Fees
- Click on Forms
- Under Request for Validation of License/Registration/Diploma Form, click on Request for Validation on License/Registration/Diploma Form (April 2011)

- B. Request to the registration authority to send the form directly to:

Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)
Attention: Credentials Evaluation Service (CES)
3600 Market Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651
USA

Please note that in addition to the *Request for Validation of License/Registration/Diploma Form*, the registration authority must include the following documents:

- Copy of the license
- Certified English translation of the license if needed

Tips for Sub-steps 2.1 and 2.2:

- ✓ The CGFNS must receive all documents provided by the **academic institution** and the **registration authority**. If the documents are not written in English, they must be accompanied by a certified English translation (performed by a person who is certified to provide this service and must sign and seal the translated documents).

- ✓ Make sure that the **academic institution** where you obtained your nursing degree and the **registration authority** where your nursing license was issued clearly understand the specific instructions on where to place signatures, seals, or stamps on the forms, documents and envelopes that must be sent to the CGFNS and use a mailing service that provides a tracking number to be able to monitor the date of arrival of the documents to the CGFNS. Make sure you obtain the tracking number.
- ✓ It may be helpful to request a person you trust in your country of training to monitor these requests closely to assure that the academic institution and registration authority are able to accurately follow all the instructions.

Sub-step 2.3: Submit Credentials Evaluation Service Online Application

- A. Complete the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) application online at www.cgfns.org following the next steps:
 - Click on Apply/Check Status
 - Click on Apply online with CGFNS Connect
 - Click on Login/Register
 - Under Create New Web User, click on “Click here to Register”
 - Once your username and password have been created, you must login in and click on Place Order to submit your application and follow the instructions
- B. Since you are applying for the Maryland nursing license, you **must** list the following under “Report Recipients:”

Donna Aversa, Examination Specialist
Maryland Board of Nursing
4140 Patterson Ave
Baltimore, MD 21215-2254
- C. The “Type of Report” that you **must** request is the “CES Professional Report.”
- D. You **must** include **both** the name that you use now and your name while attending school, if different, on your Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) application.
- E. Submit the online application for Credentials Evaluation Service and fee (\$335) to the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS). Note that personal checks are not accepted. Payment options are detailed in the online application form.

Tips for Sub-step 2.3:

- ✓ The information provided directly from your **academic institution** and **registration authority** must match the information that you provide in the Credentials Evaluation Service application. Make sure you fill out this information accurately.
- ✓ To minimize the chances of paying the fee several times, keep in mind that the time needed by the **academic institution** and **registration authority** to mail the requested information to the CGFNS may vary from country to country. *Submit the Credentials Evaluation Service online application at least two days prior to the estimated date of arrival of the documents to the CGFNS.*

STEP 3:

Pass an Oral English Test

You must pass an oral English test if you did not graduate from an onsite 3-year or longer nursing program located in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada except Quebec, New Zealand, or Ireland and recognized by the Board as requiring competence in spoken English. To take an oral English test you must follow the steps below:

- A. Choose one of the following oral English tests accepted by the Maryland Board of Nursing:
- **ILA (Inter-American Language Associates) OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview)** — For this test obtain the application on the website of the Maryland Board of Nursing at www.mbon.org/licensure/opi_app.pdf. Frequently Asked Questions about the OPI are also available at www.mbon.org/licensure/opi_faq.pdf. This is an in-person test offered in Maryland. The results are available in less than one month. The mailing address is: ILA OPI, 6400 Baltimore National Pike, # 211, Catonsville, MD 21228. The fee for the ILA OPI is \$145.
 - **TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) iBT (Internet-Based Test)** — Call (609) 771-7100 and request an application. You may obtain an application, or apply directly, using the Online Application System on the Web at www.ets.org. The mailing address is: Educational Testing Service, Rosedale Road, Princeton, NJ 08541. The fee for the TOEFL \$170.
 - **IELTS (International English Language Testing System)** — If testing after October 1, 2005, obtain an application and information at www.ielts.org. The fee for the IELTS is \$185.
- B. Complete and submit the application to take one of the tests listed above and request that your test results be sent to the Maryland Board of Nursing at the following address:
- Maryland Board of Nursing
4140 Patterson Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21215-2254
- C. Take one of the tests and receive a minimum passing score:
- A score of 3 is passing on the ILA OPI.
 - A score of 26 is passing on the TOEFL iBT.
 - A score of 7 on speaking, 6 on all other modules, and 6.5 overall is passing on the IELTS.}

Tip:

- ✓ Foreign-trained nurses have expressed a preference to take the ILA OPI oral English test because it takes place in a friendly face-to-face environment instead of dealing with an automated system with tape recorders and microphones.

STEP 4:

Complete and Submit the Application to the Maryland Board of Nursing Including the Criminal History Background Check

Before the Maryland Board of Nursing can receive the CES report from CGFNS and the oral English test results, you must file an application with the Maryland Board of Nursing and pay the application fee of \$100.

The right time to submit the Maryland Board of Nursing Application is after Steps 2 has been completed. To minimize the chances of paying the Maryland Board of Nursing application fee several times, do not submit the application until the order status of the CES by the CGFNS indicates that “Meets All Program Requirements.”

When you are ready to apply to Maryland Board of Nursing, follow the steps below:

- A. Complete the **original form** of the Maryland Board of Nursing Application that you already received with the application packet (Make sure that you follow the detailed ***instructions for completing the Maryland Board of Nursing Application form*** provided in the handout with instructions in the application packet).
- B. Complete the criminal history background check which includes getting fingerprints. Detailed instructions are included in the application packet (Fee is approximately \$60).
- C. Submit the completed Maryland Board of Nursing Application for RN License and the fee of \$100 to the Maryland Board of Nursing, including also the fingerprints obtained through the criminal history background check.
- D. The Maryland Board of Nursing application fee is valid for one year and must be renewed before it expires.
 - Inform the Maryland Board of Nursing if your address changes.

Tip:

- ✓ To speed up the application process, it is recommended to submit the application in person to the Maryland Board of Nursing. In addition, there is an office to complete the fingerprints for the criminal history background check in the same building complex where the Maryland Board of Nursing is located:

Maryland Board of Nursing
4140 Patterson Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21215-2254

STEP 5:

Pass the National Council of Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN)

The Maryland Board of Nursing will determine your eligibility to take the RN (Registered Nurse) or LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) test as soon as it receives the CES professional report from CGFNS (Step 2), the oral English test results (Step 3), and the application to the Maryland Board of Nursing including the fingerprints (Step 4).

The Maryland Board of Nursing will evaluate your complete application and determine whether you are eligible for either the RN or LPN test.

In preparation to register for the NCLEX-RN exam, follow these steps:

- A. Read carefully the NCLEX Candidate Bulletin that you already received with the application packet.
- B. Verify if you have already taken the preparation needed to pass the NCLEX exam before you register for the test.

***Note:** Once you register, you must take the test within the validity dates of your Authorization to Test (“ATT”). These validity dates cannot be extended for any reason.*

Once you have determined that you are ready to take the NCLEX-RN exam, follow these steps:

- Register for the NCLEX examination with Pearson VUE and pay the \$200 fee by mail, telephone or through the web. Follow the instructions on the Web (www.pearsonvue.com/nclex).
 - *To register by mail:* Complete the form found in the middle of the NCLEX Candidate Bulletin. Use a No. 2 pencil; do not use ink. Mail in the envelope provided in the Bulletin. Do not return this application to the Maryland Board of Nursing.
 - *Payment methods:* For online or telephone registration, you need a major credit card. If registering by mail, enclose a certified check, cashier’s check, or money order for the appropriate amount. Make checks payable to the “National Council of State Boards of Nursing.”
- Receive confirmation of registration from Pearson VUE.
- If all application requirements are completed and approved, the Maryland Board of Nursing will notify Pearson VUE and make you eligible to take the NCLEX-RN exam.
- Receive an Authorization to Test (“ATT”) from Pearson VUE by email or letter (if you registered by mail and have no email).
- Schedule an appointment to test. (If you do not appear for your NCLEX testing appointment, you will be required to re-register and re-pay NCLEX fees).
- Take the NCLEX test at your assigned Maryland NCLEX testing center. You will take the test on a computer. This is a proctored exam (an NCLEX representative will observe persons as they take their exams).

- Receive your NCLEX test results from the Maryland Board of Nursing within 5 days from your examination date.

Tips:

- ✓ The name with which you register for the test will be printed on your Authorization to Test (ATT) and **must match exactly** with the printed name on the identification, which you will present at the test center.
- ✓ The applicant may consider taking an NCLEX preparation course before registering for the NCLEX to increase the chances of passing the exam.

STEP 6:

Change an Inactive License to an Active License

The Maryland Board of Nursing issues an **Inactive RN** license status once the applicant passes the RN licensure exam (NCLEX-RN). In order to have an **Active RN License** status, a nurse who passes the RN licensure examination must either present a letter from a former employer abroad stating that the nurse practiced at least 1,000 hours as an RN within the past 5 years or proof of completion of a Nurse Refresher course approved by the Board (Theoretical – 100 Hrs; Clinical – 60 Hrs; and Nursing Lab – 8 Hrs.). Visit the Maryland Board of Nursing website under Nursing Licensure for Approved Refresher courses.

Important Contacts to Obtain the Maryland Registered Nurse (RN) License for Foreign-Trained Nurses

Maryland Board of Nursing

4140 Patterson Ave
Baltimore, MD 21215-2254
Phone: (410) 585-1900
Donna Aversa, Examination Specialist
daversa@dhmh.state.md.us
Website <http://www.mbon.org/>

Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)

Credentials Evaluation Service Application
3600 Market Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651, USA
Customer Service: (215) 349-8767
Website <http://www.cgfns.org/>

ILA-OPI

6400 Baltimore National Pike, # 211
Catonsville, MD 21228

TOEFL

1800 K Street, N.W., Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: (202) 659-0616
Fax: (202) 659-8075
Website <http://www.ets.org/>

Pearson VUE Professional Center

4340 East West Highway, Suite 901
Bethesda Towers
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: (301) 652-3131 or 1-888-709-2679
Website <http://www.pearsonvue.com/nclex>

Suburban Maryland Welcome Back Center

Montgomery County
Department of Health and Human Services
8630 Fenton Street, 10th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Tel. (240) 777-3168

For more information about the Center
visit our website: <http://lhiinfo.org>



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