

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an interstate compact?

An interstate compact is a contract among two or more states creating an agreement on a particular policy issue, adopting a certain standard or cooperating on regional or national matters. Compacts are powerful, durable and adaptive tools for ensuring cooperative action among states. In recent years, professions have been using interstate compacts to facilitate occupational licensing reciprocity among states.

How many professions use interstate compacts for occupational licensing mobility?

Occupational licensure compacts exist for the following professions:

- Advanced Practice Nursing
- Audiology and Speech Language Pathology
- Counseling
- Cosmetology
- Dentistry and Dental Hygiene
- Emergency Medical Services
- Massage Therapy
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Psychology
- K-12 Teaching

Are all occupational licensure compacts the same?

No, but all are similar in form and function. Most licensure compacts utilize a mutual recognition model, whereby a practitioner's valid, unrestricted home state license is "mutually recognized" by other compact member states. Mutual recognition compacts allow a professional to practice in the compact member states without having to go through each individual state's licensure process.

How does the Social Work Licensure Compact work?

The Social Work Licensure Compact allows social workers who have or are eligible for an active, unencumbered license in the compact member state where they reside to apply for a multistate license. After verifying eligibility, the social worker is granted a multistate license which authorizes practice in all other compact member states.

What are the advantages of the Social Work Licensure Compact?

The Social Work Licensure Compact allows eligible social workers to practice in all states that join the compact. The goal is to eliminate barriers to practice and to client care along with ensuring public protection. The Social Work Licensure Compact will also enhance a state's ability to protect public safety.

Other benefits include:

- Enhancing the mobility of social workers
- Improving access to professional social work services
- Improving continuity of care when clients travel or relocate
- Supporting relocating military spouses
- Enhancing public safety
- Creating a data system of information about licensees including license status, investigative information and adverse actions

What is a "multistate license"?

A social worker who wishes to use the compact to practice in other states will apply for a multistate license. To be eligible, a social worker must be eligible for or hold a license in their primary state of residence (which must be a member of the compact) and meet other eligibility criteria. When eligibility is verified and all fees are paid, the social worker receives the multistate license and may begin legally working in any compact member state.

Does this establish a national license for social workers?

The Social Work Licensure Compact does not establish a national license. It establishes an optional, additional pathway for practitioners to practice in states where they do not hold a license. States retain control over their licensing requirements and scope of practice.

How can a social worker apply for a multistate license?

To apply for a multistate license, a social worker's home state where they live must first join the compact. After the social worker's home state has joined the compact, the

social worker can apply for a multistate license through the state's social work licensing board.

Do social workers need to continue to apply for licenses in each state where they want to practice social work?

No. The multistate license allows social workers to practice in all compact member states. Social workers need only apply for one multistate license rather than continuing to apply to each individual state. However, if a state is not a member of the compact, the social worker will still need to apply for that individual state's license.

How can a state/jurisdiction become a member of the Social Work Licensure Compact?

To join the compact, a state must enact the model compact legislation and meet eligibility criteria.

As stated in section 3 of the compact, to be eligible to participate in the compact, a potential member state must meet all of the following criteria:

- License and regulate the practice of social work at either the clinical, master's, or bachelor's category.
- Required accredited social work education for licensure
- Require applicants for clinical licensure to complete a period of supervised practice.
- Require applicants for a Multistate License pass a Qualifying National Exam.
- Require applicants for a Multistate License undergo a FBI criminal background check

If a state meets this threshold, the state legislature must pass the Social Work Licensure Compact model legislation and the governor must sign it into law for that state to become a member of the compact.

What are the primary eligibility requirements for a multistate license?

A social worker regardless of category must:

- Hold or be eligible for an active, unencumbered license in their home state;
- Pay any applicable fees;
- Pass a background check conducted by the home state

Category Specific Requirements

Clinical Social Workers	Masters Social Workers	Bachelors Social Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pass Qualifying National Exam - Accredited MSW degree or higher - 3,000 hours or 2-years post graduate supervised clinical practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pass Qualifying National Exam - MSW degree or higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pass Qualifying National Exam - BSW degree or higher

What is the Qualifying National Exam?

As stated in Section 2 of the compact, the Qualifying National Exam is a national social work licensure examination that is approved by the compact commission. Currently the only national social work licensing examination available to states is the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) exam.

The compact specifies that licensees who wish to use the compact must pass the Qualifying National Exam that corresponds to their category of licensure. This does not mean that states must require the exam in statute for all their licensees, only those that wish to use the compact.

Section 4 also allows for the commission to create rules that would “grandparent” those who were licensed prior to their state’s adoption of the ASWB exam as well as a substantial equivalency provision that allows the commission to approve other competency-based assessments in the future should they arise.

What is the compact commission?

As established in Section 10 of the compact, the commission is the governing body made up of the participating states who have joined the compact. This is a supra-state, sub-federal government entity that serves as an instrumentality of the collective member states. The commission is responsible for creating regulations that administer and govern the compact. The commission’s delegates will be representatives from each state’s licensing board. Up to four, national social work organizations will be ex officio members of the commission’s executive committee.

Will the state be delegating regulatory authority over to the commission?

States have full authority over their own licensing laws and how they license social workers. By joining the compact, states agree to accept social workers who receive a multistate license in other compact states. States continue to determine licensing requirements and scope of practice for themselves.

What does a multistate license allow a social worker to do in a remote state?

A licensee providing social work services in a remote state under a multistate license will function within the scope of practice as individuals who are licensed in that state. It is the responsibility of the social worker to understand the laws and rules in the state where they are practicing. Social workers must abide by the scope of practice, laws, and rules of the remote state where the client is located at the time care is rendered.

Do social workers have to complete continuing education requirements in every state where they are practicing?

No. Social workers using the compact are only responsible for completing continuing education requirements for their home state license.

Is the Social Work Licensure Compact available to U.S. territories?

Yes, all 50 states, Washington D.C. and all U.S. territories can become a member of the Social Work Licensure Compact as long as they meet the state requirements outlined in the compact.

Why is the Social Work Licensure Compact important to consumers?

Through the Social Work Licensure Compact, consumers have greater access to social work services. The compact allows social workers to ensure continuity of care when clients relocate.

Additionally, states gain a supplementary layer of oversight of social workers who may enter their state to practice. The data system will allow member states to verify instantaneously that social workers based in other states have met defined standards and competencies and are in good standing with other states' regulatory boards. The compact data system will help states better protect the public.

How is the compact different from other military spouse licensure solutions?

The compact covers all licensees, not only military spouses. The compact creates two-way reciprocity. Current endorsement laws might help spouses moving to your state, but they don't provide value for current residents who wish to work in multiple jurisdictions or change residence. Licensees are still needing to re-test in some instances, provide transcripts, wait on the application to be processed. All of that is

costly and time out of the workforce. DoD prefers interstate compacts as a long-term solution for spouses. They like the regulatory certainty that a compact provides.

How can I get involved?

Social workers can contact the state chapter or national office of their professional membership association, their state's licensing board or state legislature to advocate for the licensure compact. To learn more about advocating for the licensure compact, please visit swcompact.org.