



INTERSTATE COMPACTS VS. UNIVERSAL LICENSE RECOGNITION

As states work toward greater professional licensure portability, two key policy tools are at their disposal. This fact sheet explains these two methods and how they can work together to facilitate interstate practice.

Interstate Compacts: Borderless Practice in all Member States

The Counseling Compact is an example of an **occupational licensure interstate compact** – a binding agreement among states to adopt a set of uniform licensure standards for a particular profession and to recognize valid licenses for that profession issued by any state that has enacted the agreement.

The engine of a licensure compact is a shared interstate data system that allows for rapid verification of eligibility to practice. Compacts allow practitioners to obtain a “privilege to practice” in another member state in minutes, with no need to submit materials such as test scores or academic transcripts except for a jurisprudence exam if required by the new state.

The Counseling Compact, once legislatively enacted, will allow counselors licensed and based in a member state to practice full time in other member states both in person and via telehealth. Continuing education is required *only* for the home state license.

The Counseling Compact and its licensure data system will be overseen by a public Commission comprised of delegates from each member state. The Commission is empowered to issue appropriate Rules to ensure a responsive, adaptive, and sustainable Compact. Member states are bound contractually to the terms of the Compact and Rules, making the Compact a durable long-term solution to the issue of interstate license portability.

Universal License Recognition Laws: Reducing Barriers to Entry Only

Universal license recognition laws, also known as universal reciprocity, establish a state’s intention to recognize *all* valid occupational and professional licenses from *all* states. These laws apply to all or most professions regulated by a state, are generally implemented on a case-by-case basis by state licensure boards and agencies, and may still require submission of documents and a standard waiting period for review.

Universal recognition laws are sound policy, but they do not allow practitioners based within the enacting state to practice in *other* states, and they do not allow for near-instant verification of licensure eligibility through a data system.

Additionally, universal recognition laws do not require states to commit contractually to a set of uniform requirements for licensure. These laws are enforced at the discretion of the enacting state, leaving room for significant differences in each state’s reciprocity standards.

Furthermore, without the formal structure of a Commission and data system, universal recognition laws cannot ensure effective communication and data sharing among states, potentially jeopardizing public protection.

Can these policies coexist?

Absolutely! There are several reasons for states to pursue both licensure compacts and universal recognition laws.

- A compact is most effective when enacted by all (or nearly all) states. Until that point, universal license recognition laws reduce barriers for practitioners from nonmember states.
- Not everyone is eligible for a compact. Individuals who do not qualify for a compact at their current practice level may still be able to obtain a license by endorsement in another state.
- If a state's universal licensure recognition law is written such that it does not confer eligibility for an interstate compact, there is no conflict between these two policy tools.

Why the Counseling Compact is the gold standard for licensure portability:

Long-term reform of how states license, communicate, and share licensure data requires an enduring and adaptable legislative solution.

The Counseling Compact binds member states to a cooperative system of interstate licensure that removes barriers to practice without sacrificing public protection.

The Commission's rulemaking authority ensures swift adaptation to changes in the profession, securing the long-term viability of the Compact as a comprehensive solution to the challenges of license portability.

For more information on the Counseling Compact, please visit www.CounselingCompact.org.

For a closer look at interstate compacts and universal license recognition, please [click here](#).

