



Utilizing Internationally Trained Healthcare Professionals in COVID-19 Response: Summary of State Executive Orders

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Background

Data shows there is a robust pipeline of talent waiting to contribute their lifesaving skills to America's health workforce. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that there are 263,000 immigrants and refugees with health-related degrees in the U.S. who are currently working in low-skilled jobs, are unemployed, or are out of the labor force. Of those, more than 6 in 10 are internationally educated.ⁱ Across the country, many highly qualified professionals with extensive international healthcare training and clinical experience are unable to obtain licensure without repeating training in the U.S.

Recognizing this immense and underutilized talent pool, governors in several states have temporarily waived certain licensing requirements to bolster the pipeline of healthcare workers available to respond to the pandemic. In Nevada, Governor Sisolak issued an **executive order** authorizing the waiver of licensing requirements for a wide range of medical service providers with training from another country, including doctors, nurses, and behavioral health professionals.ⁱⁱ In Colorado, Governor Polis issued an **executive order** creating pathways for internationally trained nurses and doctors to provide healthcare services in response to the pandemic. In New Jersey, Governor Murphy used his emergency authority to issue an **executive order**ⁱⁱⁱ allowing some immigrant doctors licensed outside the U.S. to join the fight against COVID-19, provided they have at least five years of clinical experience and have practiced within the past five years. Other states, including New York^{iv} and Massachusetts^v, have permitted international medical graduates to gain an emergency license before completing their U.S. residencies.

Summary of Executive Orders

Nevada

On April 1, 2020, Governor Sisolak issued an emergency directive allowing internationally trained health care workers to join the fight against COVID-19. Declaration of **Emergency Directive 011** authorizes the state's Chief Medical Officer to approve waivers of state licensing requirements for a variety of healthcare license categories and specifically references candidates for temporary licensure who have received training in another country.

Colorado

On April 15, 2020, Governor Polis issued an executive order allowing individuals with international training and experience to secure temporary licensing to expand the health care workforce of the state. **Executive Order 2020-38** requires the director of the state's licensing department to promulgate temporary emergency rules that authorize candidates in several license categories to treat patients based on the candidate's education, training, and experience.

New Jersey

In New Jersey, policymakers have taken executive action and legislative action to leverage internationally trained health care professionals to bolster the state's health workforce. On April 1,



2020, Governor Murphy issued **Executive Order 112** authorizing the state's licensing department to temporarily license internationally trained physicians as long as the candidate is in good standing, has engaged in medical practice for at least five years, and has engaged in clinical practice within the last five years.

New Jersey also passed legislation, **S-2333/AA-3910**, on April 13, 2020, which was signed by Governor Murphy on April 14, 2020. The new law delegates to the director of the state licensing department the ability to temporarily suspend licensing requirements in all licensed health professions during the pendency of the emergency.

Michigan

On April 26, 2020, Governor Whitmer issued an emergency order that provides for temporary licensing of individuals with international healthcare experience and education in a variety of health care professions. **Executive Order 2020-61** permits the licensure of physicians, physician assistants, RNs, LPNs, and respiratory therapists licensed in another country who have at least five years of practice experience and who have practiced for at least one year in the last five years.

New York

On March 23, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued an emergency order that provides increased flexibility for internationally trained doctors already in residency programs. **Executive Order 202.10** reduces (from three years to one year) the residency requirement threshold for graduates of international medical schools.

Massachusetts

On April 9, 2020, Governor Baker issued an emergency order also focused on internationally trained doctors already in residency programs. **COVID-19 Order No. 23** reduces (from three years to two years) the residency requirement threshold for graduates of international medical schools to secure temporary licensure.

To stay up to date on similar policies visit our **IMPRINT Policy Map** which tracks policy advancements regarding licensing for internationally trained professionals.

For more information, please contact mzimmer@wes.org.

ⁱMigration Policy Institute, "As U.S. Health-Care System Buckles under Pandemic, Immigrant & Refugee Professionals Could Represent a Critical Resource," (April 7, 2020), available at: www.migrationpolicy.org/news/us-health-care-system-coronavirus-immigrant-professionals-untapped-resource.

ⁱⁱCOVID-19 Declaration of Emergency Directive 011, (April 1, 2020), available at: gov.nv.gov/News/Emergency_Orders/2020/2020-04-01_-_COVID-19_Declaration_of_Emergency_Directive_011/.

ⁱⁱⁱ New Jersey Executive Order 112, (April 1, 2020), available at: nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-112.pdf.

^{iv} No. 202.10: Continuing Temporary Suspension and Modification of Laws Relating to the Disaster Emergency, (March 23, 2020), available at: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-20210-continuing-temporary-suspension-and-modification-laws-relating-disaster-emergency>.

^v Order Providing Accelerated Licensing of Physicians Educated in Foreign Medical Schools, (April 9, 2020), available at: <http://www.mass.gov/doc/april-9-2020-foreign-medical-doctors/download>.