

FAQs

What is licensure portability?

Licensure portability refers to the ability of a professional counselor licensed at the independent practice level to transfer a license to another state or U.S. jurisdiction when the counselor changes residence to that state or jurisdiction.

I sometimes hear the word “reciprocity.” What is the difference between portability and reciprocity?

In terms of licensure, portability and reciprocity mean the same thing; they are equivalent and interchangeable terms.

Is licensure portability problematic?

It is. Transferring a professional counseling license from one state or U.S. jurisdiction to another is often exceedingly difficult and has become a crisis. *Counseling Today* Online published seven articles on this issue in recent years and the American Counseling Association presented a keynote address on the lack of portability to licensing boards at the American Association of State Counseling Boards conference. ACA receives calls every week from licensed counselors—often with many years of experience—who move to another state and experience licensure reciprocity roadblocks. As a result, licensed counselors can feel that they are prisoners in their own state.

What caused this crisis?

The crisis in licensure portability occurred because state licensing boards developed their rules and regulations independently of each other. This resulted in, as one article in *Counseling Today* put it, “little consistency from state to state regarding licensure titles, counselor scope of practice, and education requirements to become a counselor.” There are currently over 45 counselor licensure titles, no two scopes of practice are the same, minimum graduate credit hours vary from none stated to 60, and supervision requirements vary from 500 to 4,500 hours. State counseling boards recognize that licensure portability is in crisis, as characterized by one licensing board chair who stated in a *Counseling Today* article that, “I see this [licensure portability] as the most important discussion point in the regulatory process for our profession.”

What is ACA doing to promote licensure portability?

ACA developed a Licensure Portability Model to promote with state counseling boards.

Why did ACA word the model the way that it did?

We wanted to propose the least restrictive approach possible. ACA believes that counselors licensed at the independent practice level without any disciplinary record should be able to move freely throughout the United States and be granted a reciprocal license in their new home state. Since laws that impact counselors (e.g., mandated reporting statutes) vary from state to state, the model recognizes that jurisdictions may require a state jurisprudence exam.

The ACA policy focuses on counselors licensed at the independent practice level. What about counselors who hold a license at other levels?

The ACA Licensure Portability Model focuses on counselors who have achieved the highest level of license—the level that permits a private (independent) practice. Other levels of license are either too idiosyncratic (e.g., the first tier of a two-tier state) or do not demonstrate enough experience (e.g., provisional or associate licenses that are issued while a candidate is completing supervision requirements) to be accepted by licensing boards across the country.

Does the ACA portability model impact school counselors working in schools or rehabilitation counselors working in offices of vocational rehabilitation?

No. Certification and licensing that permit school counselors to work in public schools are issued by state education departments. The Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential, which is required for many rehabilitation counseling positions, is a private certification issued by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. Portability for school counselors working in a school setting and rehabilitation counselors working in an Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is much less problematic.

What is ACA doing to promote the Licensure Portability Model?

ACA presented the Licensure Portability Model to state licensing boards during a presentation at the American Association of State Counseling Boards annual conference. Follow-up is ongoing.

How does the portability model affect the 20/20 licensure title and scope of practice?

The ACA-endorsed licensure title (Licensed Professional Counselor) and licensure scope of practice promulgated by 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling complements the ACA Licensure Portability Model. The ability to seamlessly transfer a license to another state increases when both jurisdictions use the same license title and scope of practice. As such, ACA is continuing to promote the 20/20 licensure title and scope of practice with licensing boards.

Still have questions?

Contact portability@counseling.org or call 800-347-6647 x397