In recent years, states have worked to reduce barriers to interstate mobility for licensed professionals through **interstate licensure compacts** or statutorily enacted agreements among states allowing licensees to practice across state lines, and **universal license recognition laws** in which a single state determines its unique process to grant a license by endorsement to a license holder from another state or territory. These policies help to solve similar problems, but there are several major differences. Notably, compacts are tailored to a particular profession and allow licensees to engage in interstate practice in all compact member states, whereas universal recognition laws attempt to account for most or all professions a state regulates but only within that state’s borders.

**Introduction**

As states seek ways to improve occupational licensure portability for out-of-state workers, universal licensure recognition laws have gained popularity. Since 2019, eight states have either implemented new or reworked existing license portability policies that may be defined under the universal licensure recognition model. The model generally sets less restrictive and more uniform licensure portability standards across most or all licensed occupations within the state.

While these universal license recognition laws do not provide for true reciprocity – instantaneous recognition of another state’s license – and may still require an application process and allow for some discretion by the licensing board in license decisions, they have the intended effect of lowering the threshold for license portability in a state and reducing time to licensure. States also may particularly benefit from the policy’s ability to be enacted unilaterally over a short period of time and the opportunity to set alternative pathways to licensure.

This table shows some similarities between universal recognition laws and interstate compacts, while highlighting key differences.

### Universal Recognition vs. Interstate Compact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION</th>
<th>INTERSTATE COMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requires practitioners to abide by the scope of practice of the state in which they are practicing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows for expedited interstate movement of practitioners during emergencies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces barriers for out-of-state practitioners aiming to practice within your state</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces barriers for in-state practitioners aiming to practice in multiple states</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Allows military spouses to maintain a single home-state license for the duration of the service member’s active duty, regardless of relocations, without submitting a separate application to each state’s licensure board | × | ✓ |<sup>1</sup>
| Allows practitioners to work in multiple states, both in person and via telehealth/telework, without submitting a separate application to each state’s licensure board, requiring verification of the current license, or obtaining a new background check | × | ✓ |
| Brings together a coalition of states to establish uniform and enforceable interstate licensure standards that are narrowly tailored to the public protection requirements of a specific profession | ✓ | ✓ |
| Enhances public protection by creating a multi-state database of licensure information to facilitate collaboration on license verification and investigations of potential misconduct | ✓ | ✓ |
| Allows multistate practice without requiring the practitioner to change state of residence | Sometimes* | ✓ |

* Some states’ universal recognition laws, such as those in Iowa and Arizona, require the practitioner to reside in the state while others, such as Colorado’s and Idaho’s, do not.

<sup>1</sup> Indicating to a compact member state. Verification based on practitioner complying with compact criteria for privilege to practice in another member state.

<sup>2</sup> Applicable when practitioner travels from one compact member state to another compact member state.
Adoption of Interstate Licensure Compacts and Universal Recognition Laws

The Council of State Governments (CSG) identified 12 states that have enacted some type of universal recognition policy for out-of-state licensed workers.

Forty-two states have enacted at least one interstate licensure compact, and 29 states belong to at least three interstate licensure compacts. These currently active statutorily enacted agreements among states allowing licensees to practice across state lines involve 138 separate pieces of legislation and include compacts in the fields of physical therapy, nursing, emergency medical services, psychology, occupational therapy and more.

Every state and territory has enacted at least two dozen interstate compacts in areas outside of occupational licensure, including insurance regulation, corrections, foster care, and education.

Universal Recognition Laws

Active Interstate Licensure Compacts

- State has enacted a universal recognition law
- 0 compacts
- 1 compacts
- 2 compacts
- 3 compacts
- 4 compacts
- 5 compacts
- 6 compacts
State and U.S. Territory Membership to Interstate Licensure Compacts

Navigating the various state licensing requirements, regulations, and fees can present challenges for workers.

To address these challenges, states and professions have turned to occupational licensure interstate compacts. These compacts create reciprocal professional licensing practices between states, while ensuring the quality and safety of services and safeguarding state sovereignty. To date, over 40 states and territories have adopted at least one of the following occupational licensure compacts.*

*First entries expected to be included in 2021

**Every state and territory has enacted at least two dozen interstate compacts in areas outside of occupational licensure, including insurance regulation, corrections, foster care, and education.

### Preventing Conflicts Through Exemptions for Compacts

While states are using universal recognition laws as part of their toolkits to increase license mobility, they are also exempting interstate occupational licensure compacts from the provisions of the universal recognition policy. Policymakers understand the importance of interstate compacts and their tailored functionality for the professions they were designed for.

Interstate compacts are developed in a highly negotiated process in which universal requirements for compact participation are agreed upon by practitioners and industry experts. By joining a compact, states are agreeing to the requirements for participation as listed in the compact.

Universal license recognition policies that do not include a provision excluding interstate compacts may come in conflict with requirements for participation in a compact.

Licensure compacts and universal recognition statutes can coexist without conflict or redundancy as long as provisions to exclude interstate compacts are inserted into the universal recognition bills. Enhancing the ability of practitioners to engage in interstate practice requires more than a one-size-fits-all approach. States should account for industry-tailored reciprocity mechanisms such as interstate compacts when crafting universal recognition laws.

### EXAMPLE LANGUAGE EXEMPTING COMPACTS FROM UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION LAWS

**ARIZONA STAT. 32-4320(D) (F)

P. A license or certificate issued pursuant to this section is valid only in this state and does not make the person eligible to be part of an interstate compact. A regulating entity under this title may determine eligibility for an applicant to be licensed or certified under this section if the applicant is not part of an interstate compact.

**COLORADO HB 20-1326 (2020) SEC. 4(C)

(a) An applicant is not entitled to licensure, certificate, registration, or enrollment pursuant to this subsection (f) approving the licensure, certificate, registration, or enrollment would violate an existing compact or reciprocity agreement.[–]

**IDAHO STAT. 67-9409(7)

(b) If an applicant is a member of a profession or occupation covered by an applicable compact or reciprocity agreement from seeking licensure pursuant to this section. In such a situation, a person may apply for universal licensure under this section or may apply for licensure pursuant to the terms of the applicable compact or reciprocity agreement. A licensing authority may promulgate applicable rules if necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

**INDIANA CODE 25-1-17-8(F)

(a) An applicant is not entitled to licensure, certificate, registration, or enrollment pursuant to this subsection (d) if the applicant is a member of an interstate licensure compact. An applicant who is licensed in another state pursuant to an interstate compact, or which has, in statute or by agreement, entered into a licensing compact, or any reciprocity agreements from seeking licensure pursuant to this subsection (d) if the applicant is a member of an interstate licensure compact. A regulating entity under this title may determine eligibility for an applicant to be licensed or certified under this section if the applicant is not part of an interstate compact.

**MISSOURI STAT. 324.099(10) (11)

(b) If an applicant is not entitled to licensure, certificate, registration, or enrollment pursuant to this section, an applicant to be licensed or certified under this section if the applicant is not part of an interstate compact.

**UTAH CODE § 58-1-302(5)

In accordance with Section 58-1-107, license endorsement provisions in this section are subject to and may be supplemented or superseded by any other provisions of law, a license issued under this section shall be valid only in this state and shall not make the person eligible to be part of an interstate compact. An applicant who is licensed in another state pursuant to an interstate compact shall not be eligible for a license issued under this section.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE STAT. 332-G:14 (I)

(a) Any board or commission regulating a profession of profession shall not be a member of an interstate licensure compact, or which has, in statute or by administrative rule, a procedure for reciprocity or temporary license for individuals from other states, need not comply with this section for any license or certificate issued by the board or commission.

**GEORGIA HB 773 (2019-2020)

(a) A license issued pursuant to this Code section shall be valid only in this state and shall not make the person eligible to be part of an interstate compact. A regulating entity under this title may determine eligibility for an applicant to be licensed or certified under this Code section if the applicant is not part of an interstate compact.
For More Information

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