

Behavioral Health Workforce: State Legislative Trends

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National Dialogues for Behavioral Health (NDBH) Conference



Agenda

NCSL Introduction & State Legislatures 101

2025 Health Workforce Trends

Behavioral Health Trends

- Data Collection & Analysis
- Career Pipelines and Emerging Occupations
- Licensure Portability and Pathways
- Scope of Practice
- Retention Strategies

Additional Resources

How NCSL Serves State Legislatures

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) is the **bipartisan** organization serving **legislators and legislative staff** in America's 50 states, D.C. and territories.

With a strong belief in the importance of the legislative institution, NCSL knows **when states are strong, our nation is strong.**



Source: NCSL

POLICY RESEARCH

NCSL provides trusted, nonpartisan policy research and analysis

CONNECTIONS

NCSL links legislators and staff with each other and with experts

TRAINING

NCSL delivers training tailored specifically for legislators and staff

STATE VOICE IN D.C.

NCSL represents and advocates on behalf of states on Capitol Hill

MEETINGS

NCSL meetings facilitate information exchange and policy discussions

How comfortable do you feel engaging with your state legislature?

- 1 – Not my thing.**
- 2 – I could, if I really had to.**
- 3 – I feel okay, but intimidated.**
- 4 – I've done it before.**
- 5 – Put me in coach, I'm ready.**

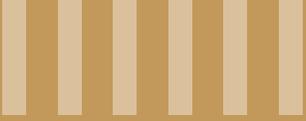


1975 to 2025... 50 Years of State Legislatures



“Although there are plenty of similarities between today’s legislatures and the ones in 1975, there has been significant evolution since then.”

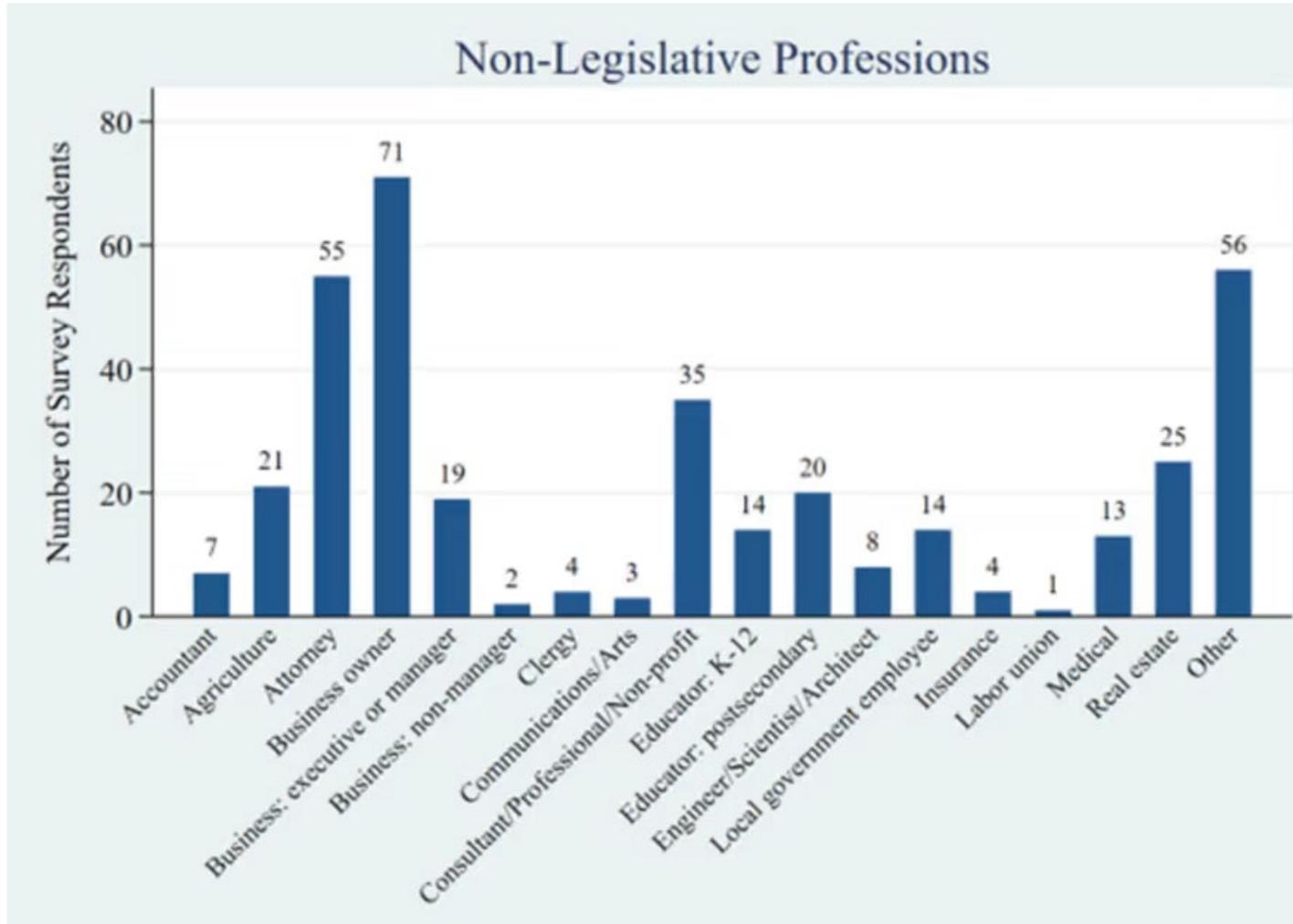
—Tim Storey



State Legislatures 101



WHO: State Legislators



Source: [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

54% of surveyed legislators held employment outside of the legislature.

Of the 46% of respondents who did not hold outside employment, almost half were retired.

How many state and territory legislators are there in the U.S.?

- A. Less than 3,000
- B. 3,001 – 5,000
- C. 5,001 – 7,000
- D. More than 7,000

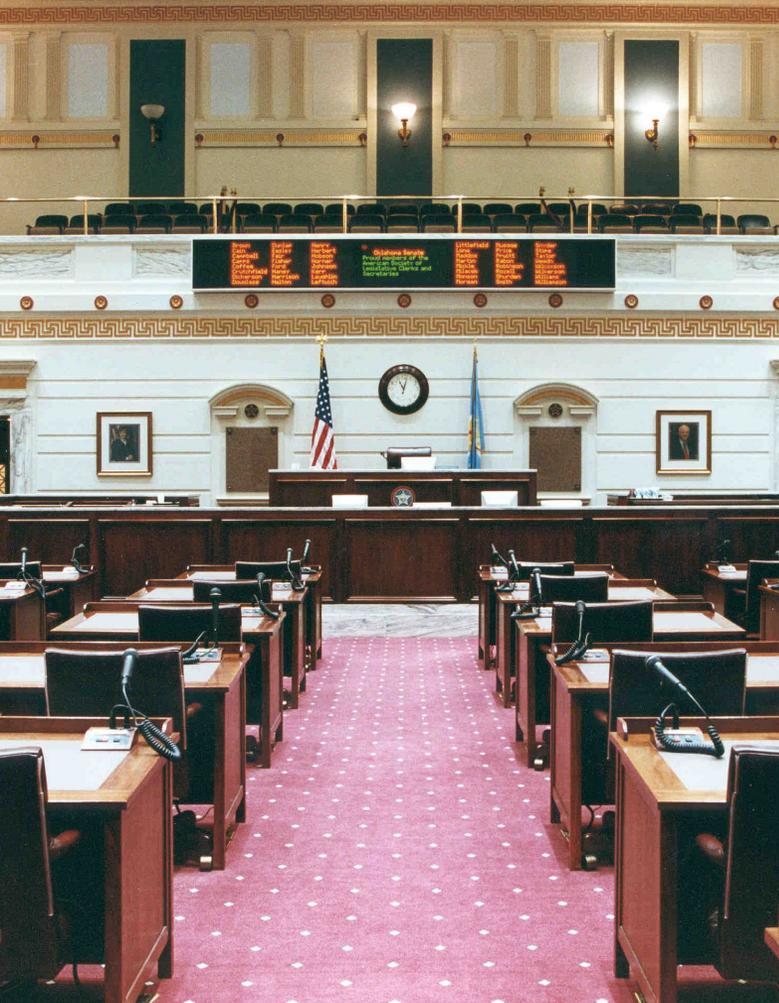


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WHO: State Legislatures



Leadership

Capacity

Turnover

How many legislative staff work in the states and territories?

- A. 11,000
- B. 27,000
- C. 33,000
- D. 52,000



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WHAT: Legislative Process



Which state has the tallest state capitol building?

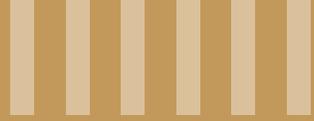
- A. Florida
- B. Louisiana
- C. Illinois
- D. North Dakota



Which state has the tallest state capitol building?

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WHERE: State Capitols



How many bills are introduced, on average each legislative session?

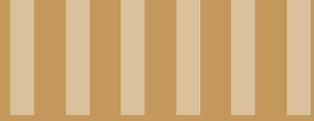
- A. Less than 30,000
- B. 50,000
- C. 100,000
- D. More than 150,000



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WHEN: Legislative Calendar



Which state had the highest passage rate of legislation in 2024?

- A. Arkansas
- B. Colorado
- C. Utah
- D. Louisiana
- E. Idaho



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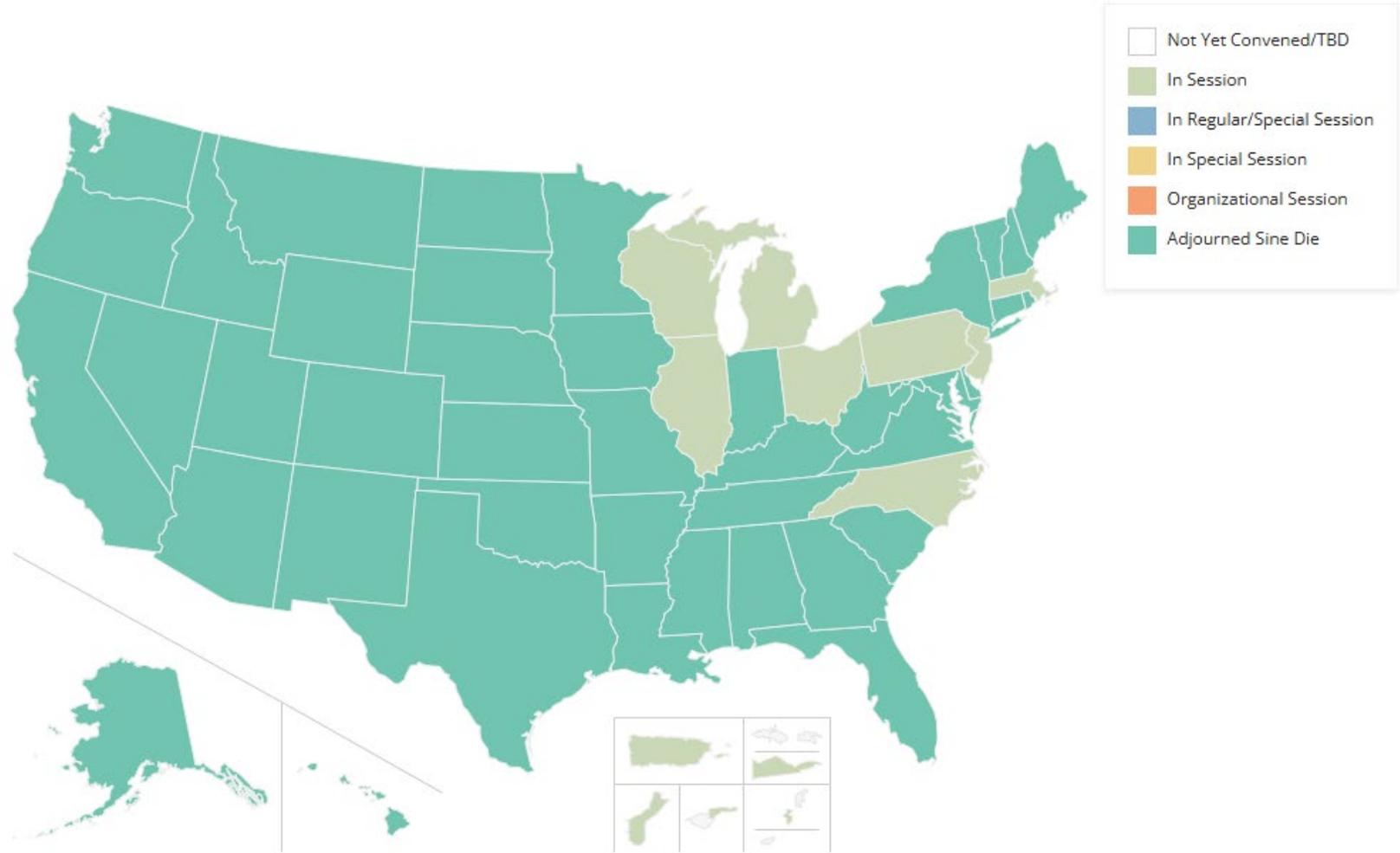


WHEN: Special Legislative Sessions

2025 State Legislative Session Calendar

Click on any state to find information on regular session dates, and, if necessary, special session dates.

Switch View ▾



Source: [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)



WHY:
Federalism in
Action



States are laboratories of democracy.

Health Policy A-Z
2024 Health Research Requests



Database 

Health Workforce Legislation Database

This database covers topics relating to health workforce, including several professions and strategies. It includes all enacted legislation from 2024 to present, and is updated biweekly as legislation is identified by NCSL staff.

- **Years Tracked:** 2024-present
- **Update Frequency:** Biweekly
- **Legislation Included:** Enacted-only

[Topic Descriptions](#)

[User Guidance](#)

TOPICS Clear		STATES Clear		
<input type="checkbox"/> All Topics <input type="checkbox"/> Professions - Behavioral Health <input type="checkbox"/> Professions - Long-Term Care <input type="checkbox"/> Professions - Maternal Health <input type="checkbox"/> Professions - Nursing <input type="checkbox"/> Professions - Oral Health		<input type="checkbox"/> All States <input type="checkbox"/> Alabama <input type="checkbox"/> Alaska <input type="checkbox"/> Arizona <input type="checkbox"/> Arkansas <input type="checkbox"/> California		
KEYWORD	STATUS	BILL NUMBER	YEAR	AUTHOR
<input type="text"/>	All <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>	2024 <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>
Search		Reset All		

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NCSL Database

Health Workforce Legislation Database

Health Workforce Trends: State Legislation

NCSL Resource:
[Health Workforce Legislation Database](#) (Ongoing)

Enacted State Legislation Addressing Health Workforce (as of October 3, 2025)



Source: NCSL (2025)

Types of interventions:

- Licensure and certification (335 bills)
- Scope of practice (183 bills)
- Recruitment and retention (147 bills)
- Education and training (105 bills)



Health Workforce Trends: State Legislation

NCSL Resource:
[Health Workforce Legislation Database](#) (Ongoing)

Enacted State Legislation Addressing Other Professions (as of October 3, 2025)



Source: NCSL (2025)



Rural Health Transformation Program

- \$50 billion in funding for states between FY 2026 and FY 2030.
- [NOFO](#) released on Sept. 15, applications due Nov. 5.
- Administered by CMS.
- State governors' offices are responsible for completing and submitting applications.
- [As of Oct. 2](#), 48 states are requesting public input.



WORKFORCE MEASURES

- Continuing education
- Career pathways
- Licensure compacts
- Scope of practice
- Telehealth

ADVISORY GROUPS

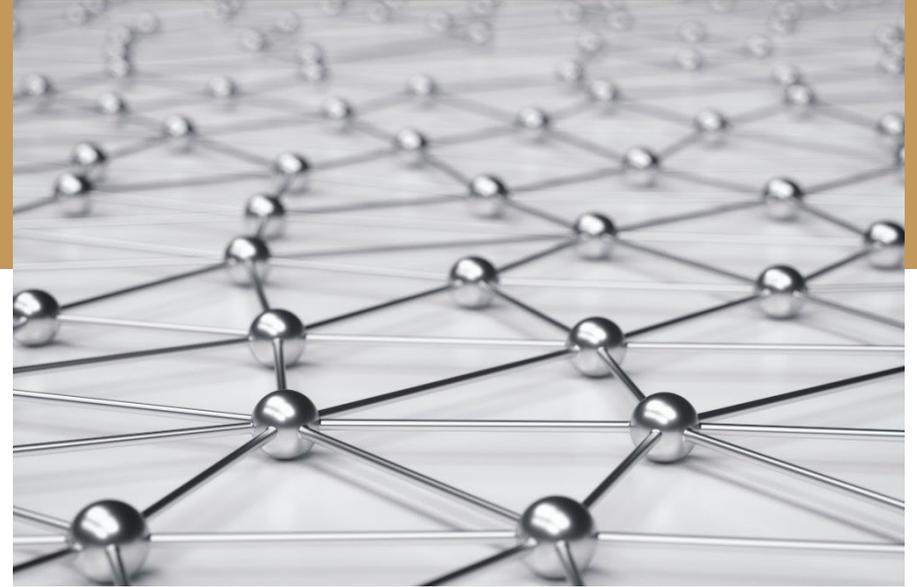
- [Alabama Advisory Workgroup](#)
- [North Dakota Rural Health Transformation Interim Committee](#)

BUDGET ACTS

- California [SB 105](#) (Enacted)
- Michigan [HB 4706](#) (Passed)
- North Carolina [HB 389](#) (Pending)
- Pennsylvania [SB 160](#) (Pending)
- Utah [HJR 101](#) (Adopted)

Data Collection and Analysis

2025 State Legislation



Veritas Health Solutions developed a [Cross-Profession Minimum Data Set](#), a new tool with a set of core questions for collecting data elements for health workforce planning.

To date, at least six states have implemented the CPMDS, and 13 states are exploring options for implementation. [Read more on Utah here.](#)

FLORIDA **SB 1620**

Allows the Center for Behavioral Health Workforce to request information from boards.

MAINE **HB 981**

Creates a Primary Care Advisory Council to study the primary care system and workforce.

NEW MEXICO **SB 3**

Requires regional behavioral health plans and coordination with higher education.

NORTH DAKOTA **HB 1012**

Requires a study of obstetricians, family doctors, midwives and doulas.

TEXAS **HB 3801**

Establishes an advisory board and a workgroup on nursing career pathways.

VIRGINIA **HB 1600**

Requires the governor to designate an advisor on health workforce development.

Data Collection and Analysis: Behavioral Health

LOUISIANA (SCR 23, 2025)

- **Requests a study on behavioral health workforce, including:**
 - Current services covered by Medicaid managed care and private insurance.
 - The status of education programs for future providers.
 - The capacity for higher education institutions to increase educational opportunities.
 - Strategies to increase access to behavioral health services in rural areas.

UTAH (HB 365, 2025)

- **Requests a comprehensive study of wait times and barriers to accessing pediatric mental health care, including:**
 - Average time between a child's initial referral and the first available appointment.
 - Factors affecting wait times, including geography, insurance, providers, care needs and access barriers.
 - Compare wait times across geography, mental health providers, practice settings and payment models.

Recruitment: Career Pipelines

See NCSL's report: [Leveraging Career Pathway Programs: State Strategies to Combat Health Care Workforce Shortages](#) (Sept. 2023)



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- [B 55](#) (2024) supports career pathways in behavioral health and human services occupation.
- Establishes scholarship program at University of the District of Columbia for residents pursuing counseling or social work degrees.



TEXAS

- [SB 1401](#) (2025) establishes the Texas Mental Health Profession Pipeline Program.
- Builds guided pathways for public junior college students to transfer to a baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate degree or certificate.



FLORIDA

- [SB 7018](#) (2024) created the Health Care Innovation Council to discuss tech, workforce and delivery innovations.
- Loan repayment program for innovative solutions.

Recruitment: Associate Roles

ARKANSAS

Ark. Code Ann. §17-27-101

Licensed Associate Counselor

- Earn a graduate degree.
- Complete graduate semester hours.
- Pass written, oral and situational examinations.
- Submit a supervision agreement.
- Pass criminal background check.

DELAWARE

Del. Code Ann. tit. 24 §3030

Licensed Associate Counselor of Mental Health

- Effective for two years.
- Meet all requirements for licensed professional counselors of mental health, except requirements for experience.
- Submit a plan for professional direct supervision.

UTAH

Utah Code Ann. § 58-60-102(17)

Licensed Associate Clinical Mental Health Counselor

- Earn a master's or doctorate degree in mental health counseling or a related field.
- Complete a qualifying internship or practicum.
- Pass the National Counselor Examination (NCE) and the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE).

Licensure Portability: Interstate Compacts

See NCSL's article: [Are Interstate Compacts an Answer to Health Workforce Shortages?](#) (Nov. 2023)

COMPACT	PROFESSION	PARTICIPATION
Nurse Licensure Compact	Registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, including psychiatric nurses	41 states, Virgin Islands and Guam
Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT)	Psychologists	40 states, D.C. and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Counseling Compact	Professional counselors	At least 37 states
Social Work Licensure Compact	Social workers	At least 22 states

Source: NCSL (2025)

Licensure Pathways: Social Workers

Practice Requirements in lieu of Exam

District of Columbia [B 25 \(2025\)](#)

Illinois [Code Stat. tit. 225 §20/5](#)

Utah [Code Ann. §58-60-205](#)

Temporary Removal of Exam Requirement

Connecticut [HB 6733 \(2023\)](#)

Rhode Island [Gen. Laws §5-39.1-8](#)

Montana [HB 499 \(2023\)](#)

Licensure Pathway without Passing Exam

Colorado [SB 115 \(2024\)](#)

Maryland [SB 145 \(2023\)](#)

Skip MSW Exam if Pursuing Clinical Licensure

Minnesota [HF 5247 \(2024\)](#)

New Hampshire [HB 271 \(2025\)](#)

Do not Require Exam for Bachelor's License

Louisiana [Rev. Stat. §37:2706](#)

Nebraska [Rev. Stat. §38-2128](#)

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Scope of Practice Policy

This resource provides nonpartisan, unbiased and objective policy information about the scope of practice laws in the 50 states, District of Columbia and territories.



Scope of Practice Policy Home

[Behavioral Health Providers](#)

[Advanced Practice Registered Nurses](#)

[Optometrists](#)

[Oral Health Providers](#)

[Pharmacists](#)

[Physician Assistants](#)

Related Topic: [HEALTH](#)

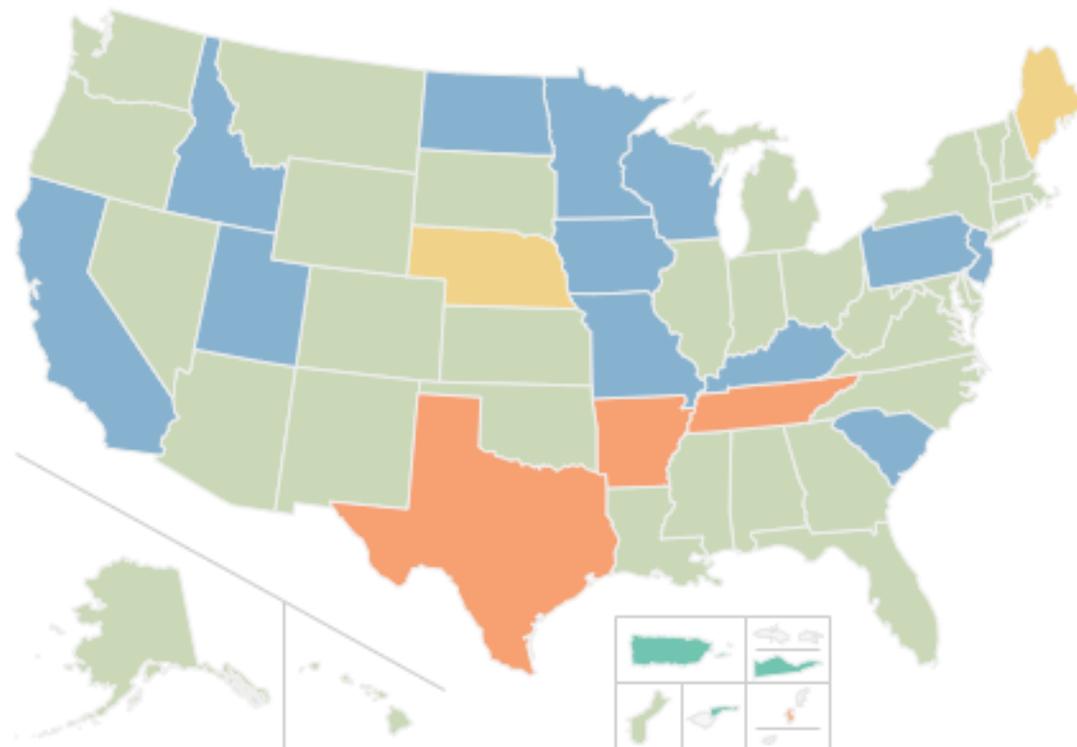
This resource was designed by the National Conference of State Legislatures to educate state policymakers about scope of practice issues related to a range of non-physician health care practitioners who provide important services and can enhance access to care.

Non-physician health care practitioners are increasingly being used to render services in rural and underserved areas to make up for provider shortages. A practitioner's scope of practice refers to what a health professional can and cannot do to or for a patient, and is defined by state professional regulatory boards — typically with the guidance or instruction of the state's legislature. State legislators and other policymakers consider a broad range of issues related to scope of practice, including supervision requirements, prescriptive authority and other requirements for practice.

Scope of Practice: Licensed Professional Counselors Diagnosis

Behavioral Health Providers: Licensed Professional Counselor Ability to Diagnose

Switch View ▼



- Diagnostic ability outlined in statute
- Diagnostic ability not outlined in statute
- Diagnostic ability not allowed in state
- Diagnostic ability not outlined in statute, but outlined in administrative code
- No data currently available

Source: NCSL [Licensed Professional Counselors Ability to Diagnose \(2025\)](#)



Scope of Practice: Psychologist Prescriptive Authority



New Mexico (SB 53, 2025)

Adds prescribing psychologists with at least 4 years of prescribing medication to the list of independently licensed prescribing clinicians.



Utah (SB 26, 2024)

Grants prescriptive authority to licensed psychologists who hold certain requirements.



Virginia (SB 752, 2025)

Directs the Boards of Psychology and Medicine to convene a workgroup on psychologist authority to prescribe.

Retention: Mental and Physical Wellbeing

FIRST RESPONDERS

- **Alabama** [HJR 273](#) (2025): Study Commission on PTSD in First Responders.
- **Illinois** [SR 936](#) (2024): Urges Congress to support mental health of first responders.
- **Texas** [HB 35](#) (2025): Peer support network.
- **Connecticut** [SB 342](#) and **Washington** [HB 2311](#) (2024): Confidentiality of peer support services.

LICENSURE APPLICATIONS

- **Arizona** [HB 2173](#) (2025): No questions on previous mental health assistance, diagnosis or treatment.
- **Indiana** [HB 1385](#) (2025): Exception to disqualifying conditions for a nurse aide or other unlicensed employee.
- **Rhode Island** [SB 695](#) (2025): No inquiries regarding a clinician's mental health diagnosis.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- **Hawaii** [SB 3279](#) (2024): State of Well-Being Project for mental health training.
- **Rhode Island** [SB 695](#) (2025): Recognizes the Medical Society program to address burnout, substance abuse and health issues.
- **Utah** [SB 26](#) (2024): Expands the licensees included in the Utah Professionals Health Program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Health Care Workforce Resources](#)
- [Health Workforce Legislation Database](#)
- [Health Costs, Coverage and Delivery State Legislation Database](#)
- [Summary of Artificial Intelligence 2025 Legislation](#)
- [Telehealth Explainer Series: A Toolkit for State Legislatures](#)
- [Health Workforce Trends in State Legislatures](#)
- [Allied Health Professions: Considerations for State Legislatures](#)



Reach out
anytime!



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