

# News Release

National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc.  
111 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2900  
Chicago, IL 60601-4277

**Contact: Kristin Hellquist**  
Associate Director, Policy & External Relations  
312.525.3665 direct  
312.279.1032 fax

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**JANUARY 12, 2004**

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF NURSING (NCSBN) ISSUES STATEMENT RELATED TO NURSES WANTING TO TAKE NCLEX® FOR PURPOSES OF OBTAINING A U.S. VISASCREEN™**

**Chicago, IL.** - On July 25, 2003, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published final rules implementing section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). Section 343 of IIRIRA requires that certain health care professionals successfully complete a screening program (U.S. VisaScreen™) prior to receiving an occupational visa, such as the H-1B, H-2B, TN status and permanent (green card) visas. Screening includes an assessment of the education of the applicant to ensure that it is comparable to a U.S. graduate in the same profession; verification that licenses are valid and unencumbered; successful completion of an English language proficiency examination; and, for nurses only, verification that the nurse has either passed the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) licensure examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®) or the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) qualifying examination (an NCLEX-RN predictor examination). In the case of practical or vocational nurses, successful completion of the NCLEX-PN® examination is required. NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN are developed and administered by NCSBN in cooperation with its members, the 60 U.S. state and territorial boards of nursing.

Under the final rules, certain nurses who are seeking temporary or permanent occupational visas as well as those who are seeking NAFTA status are required to first obtain a U.S. VisaScreen as part of the visa process. Prior to this final rule, only those nurses seeking permanent occupational visas were required to obtain a VisaScreen. Currently, the U.S. government has recognized the CGFNS/ICHP organization as the only authorized provider of the VisaScreen for nurses.

Although the final rule became effective September 23, 2003, USCIS will issue a waiver for those seeking temporary visas and NAFTA status for one year. Additional information about these new rules can be obtained from USCIS at [http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/Health\\_Cert.htm](http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/Health_Cert.htm).

NCSBN understands that some nurses impacted by these new rules already have valid state or territorial nursing licenses and are currently practicing in U.S. states and territories. NCSBN recognizes that many of these nurses may wish to take NCLEX to comply with the new VisaScreen rules. Therefore, NCSBN is working with its member boards of nursing to enable these impacted nurses to take the NCLEX examination (for U.S. VisaScreen purposes only) through a unique (“NCLEX for VisaScreen”) process offered by participating state member boards of nursing and NCSBN itself. For further information on taking “NCLEX for VisaScreen”, please contact the NCLEX information line at [nclexinfo@ncsbn.org](mailto:nclexinfo@ncsbn.org) or toll-free at 866.293.9600. Additional NCLEX information can be obtained at <http://www.ncsbn.org/>, including information on the NCSBN online course offered to help prepare for the NCLEX-RN examination.

###

*The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), composed of Member Boards, provides leadership to advance regulatory excellence for public protection.*