



Why is NSCN temporarily pausing the IEN expedited licensure process?

NSCN has been conducting an ongoing evaluation of the IEN expedited licensure process every six months since May 2023. The third evaluation period ended in October 2024, and we are currently in the fourth and final evaluation period.

Effective January 20, 2025, we are putting a temporary pause on accepting new applications to the expedited licensure pathway for internationally educated nurses (IENs). The pause is expected to be in place for three to five months.

The pause will not impact active applications currently in queue and they will be processed as usual. NSCN will continue to accept applications from IENs via the traditional licensure pathway through the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) while the expedited pathway is on pause.

Over 3,700 qualified IENs have been licensed via the expedited pathway since its launch on May 1, 2023.

RATIONAL FOR THE TEMPORARY PAUSE

We are temporarily pausing the intake of new applications to the IEN expedited licensure process primarily for three reasons:

System Impact

In the 2023-2024 licensing year, NSCN licensed 1,944 IENs via the IEN expedited licensure process. 39% (756) of IENs licensed are living abroad. Another 29% (559) are living elsewhere in Canada. As such, 69% of the IENs licensed under the expedited licensure process do not live in Nova Scotia. While we continue to prioritize applications from IENs living in Nova Scotia, there is an ongoing downward trend of applicants with a Nova Scotia address.

When a nurse intends to get licensed in another jurisdiction, they must request that NSCN send a Verification of Registration (VOR) form to the new regulatory body. In 2024, NSCN issued 2,274 VORs. 30% (675) of the VORs were for IENs licensed under the expedited process. Additionally, 33% (220) of these IENs indicated they were seeking licensure elsewhere because they are planning to leave Nova Scotia permanently (or, not come to Nova Scotia at all.)

The downward trend in local IEN applicants in addition to the upward trend in VOR requests from IENs licensed under the expedited process (and having no intent of coming to or staying in Nova Scotia) suggests the Nova Scotia health system may not be positively impacted by the process.

We must also consider the value and impact of the expedited pathway knowing the primary applicant pool is not living in Nova Scotia or Canada, and nearly a third of successful applicants never arrive in Nova Scotia before they seek licensure in another province or jurisdiction.

Sustainability

There are over 3,500 active applications in the queue to be assessed and processed. Additionally, there are 7,000 applications "on hold" due to applicant inactivity which require periodic staff assessment and engagement. When developing the IEN expedited licensure pathway, we predicted application numbers would peak in early 2024 and trend downward to near baseline by fall 2024. This is not the case as we continue to see a consistent number of applications, mostly from IENs who do not live in Nova Scotia or Canada.



The government generously provided funding to support this initiative. The funding was exhausted in late 2024. Looking forward, we must strategize how we will manage the ongoing work with our current resources. During the temporary pause we will process the remaining active applications and manage the on-hold applications without accumulating new applications. This will enable the Registration Services leadership team to develop a resource plan to manage the work when the pathway reopens, and for temporary staff to complete their contracts.

Evaluation Process

We have begun the final evaluation period. We have had an established evaluation framework with key data points in place since 2023. Findings from the first three evaluations suggest we should also review our expedited licensure directives related to currency of practice requirements and exam eligibility, conditional licensure and application fees. The temporary pause would enable us to conduct this evaluation.

Will this impact applicants already in the IEN expedited licensure process?

No. Applicants in queue will not be impacted. The team will continue to process applications as usual.

Will the temporary pause benefit current applicants, future applicants and NSCN?

Temporarily pausing the submission of new applications enables the NSCN team to focus exclusively on current applicants, creating space for future applicants. NSCN will use this time to evaluate current policies and approaches and make any changes required to ensure the process is effective and efficient, in addition to sustainable.

Can I or other IENs apply to NSCN while the process is on pause?

Yes. The traditional IEN application pathway is still available. IENs must first apply to NNAS to have their education and credentials assessed. Once they have the NNAS advisory report, they can apply to NSCN.

Can I apply via the IEN expedited licensure pathway while it's on pause in preparation for when it re-opens?

No. The IEN expedited licensure application has been removed from the system as part of the evaluation and will not be available during the pause period.

If I apply via the traditional IEN pathway and the IEN expedited licensure pathway re-opens, can I switch application pathways?

No. You must re-apply under the expedited pathway because there may be changes in the expedited pathway application. Please Note: Any fees paid under the traditional process are non-refundable or transferrable.

How long will the IEN expedited licensure pathway be on pause?

3 - 5 months, however the timeline may change based on the evaluation findings.

Is it possible the IEN expedited licensure pathway may be discontinued permanently?

NSCN is committed to having effective and efficient registration and licensing processes for all its applicants. At this time, we do not anticipate that the IEN expedited licensure pathway will be discontinued, however there could be process changes based on the findings of the evaluation when the IEN expedited licensure pathway reopens.

How will we know when the temporary pause on the IEN expedited licensure pathway has ended?

We will post a notice on our website.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

Please direct questions to registration@nscn.ca.

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