

New Hampshire Office of Professional Licensure and Certification

Integral Link to Healthcare Workforce Development

Fall 2022



Foundation for
Healthy Communities



New Hampshire
Hospital Association



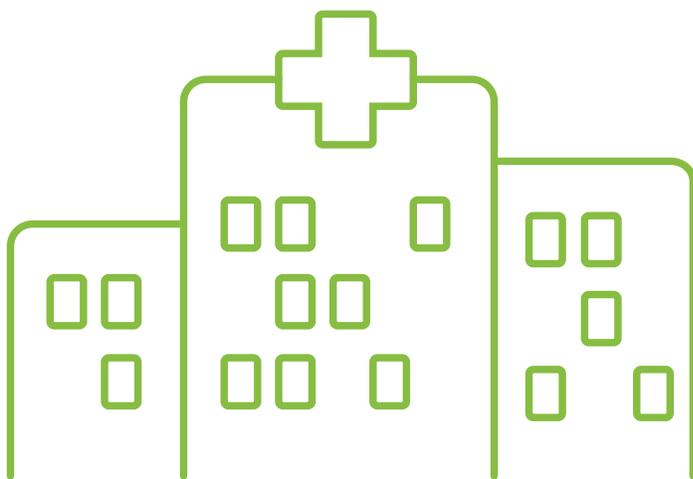
forward
FUND

Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on the Health Professional Education Summit 2003

“State licensing bodies are called upon to protect the public by setting minimum standards of competency for health professionals. They generally do so by establishing educational requirements, assessing character and other attributes, and testing through licensure exams. Health professionals that meet the requirements are granted the right to practice in a given state.

Licensing boards interact with health professionals after initial licensure by requiring periodic re-licensure or imposing discipline on poor performers.

The majority of U.S. health professionals are licensed; thus these boards have a large impact on the ongoing development of health professionals.”



OPLC and the Forward Fund

Introduction to OPLC

New Hampshire's Office of Professional Licensure and Certification (OPLC) was established by Governor Hassan in 2015 as part of the State of NH's budget trailer bill. All existing professional licensing boards (Joint Board, Real Estate Board and Health Boards – representing 54 boards) were brought under the umbrella of OPLC. The OPLC has two primary functions: support licensing and support enforcement. "The purpose of the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification is to promote efficiency and economy in the administration of the . . . professional licensing and certification boards. . . . The individual licensing and certification boards that are organized under the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification have specialized knowledge and experience and are separate and distinct for the purpose of regulating their various professions".¹

Since its inception in 2015, OPLC has undergone major organizational changes to meet their two primary functions of licensing and enforcement, in an efficient and economic manner, and those changes are still underway. OPLC has issued a strategic plan for FY 23-25 that aims to support several goals including enhancing customer service, increasing licensure portability and fulfilling statutory and regulatory requirements for itself and the boards.

¹ RSA 310-A:1 (2015). (It should be noted that since it was part of the budget trailer bill, boards were not engaged in the creation of OPLC at that time).

As the Institute of Medicine noted in its 2003 report, state licensing boards have a large impact on the growth, development and retention of health professionals. This is clearly identified in the Forward Fund's "Giving Care: A Strategic Plan to Expand and Support New Hampshire's Health Care Workforce".²

² Giving Care full report (March 2022): <https://endowment-assets.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/images/Giving-Care-A-Strategic-Plan-to-Expand-Support-NHs-Health-Care-Workforce.pdf>

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The intersection between the Forward Fund's work and OPLC lies in the fact that 15% (16) of the 107 strategies outlined in the Giving Care report are related to OPLC and licensure:

- **Pipeline** action plan (11 strategies),
- **Policy** action plan (4 strategies),
- **Data** action plan (1 strategy)





Pipeline Channels

There are eleven (11) strategies within the Pipeline Objectives that are directly related to OPLC and licensure. Chief among these strategies is supporting investments in internships and apprenticeships, establishing a central repository of field-based training opportunities, removing barriers from initial and reciprocal licensure processes, and fast-tracking lapsed licensees to keep people on the job.



Policy Considerations

Several policy considerations related to OPLC rank high, including creating apprenticeship models for critical professions, removing barriers for foreign trained health professionals to come to New Hampshire, evaluating licensure compacts, reducing, or removing redundancies to licensure, and prioritizing strategies to address known issues. Several of these policy items, among others, could require legislative and/or regulatory changes.



Data Resources

OPLC is uniquely positioned to be a major player in establishing an administrative home for health care workforce data systems.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

OPLC's infrastructure and capacity is still in development as an agency charged with overseeing over 50 licensing boards, which covers more than 175 different license types. The following SWOT analysis is based on observations by the New Hampshire Hospital Association and Foundation for Healthy Communities of various healthcare related boards including the Board of Nursing, Board of Medicine, Board of Pharmacy, Medical Imaging and Radiology Technology, among others.

Strengths

Strategic Plan for SFY 23-25 identifies key actions needed to bring OPLC and boards forward to support licensees and the public

One agency provides the umbrella support for all individual licensing boards

Efficiencies with staffing, space, knowledge and support

Engaged and responsive Executive Director



Weaknesses

Individual boards have their own rules governing licensure, discipline, investigations, inspections, etc.

Lack of board quorums and board member engagement has a direct impact on individuals seeking a license

Board members who are not active in their professional field may not be current with scopes of practice, workforce trends, or how licensure requirements impact individuals entering the field.

Administrative rules process is cumbersome, time consuming and understaffed to support boards' needs

OPLC and its boards are directly impacted by the legislative process / changes which can sometimes impact progress

Lack of data

Antiquated licensing process (inadequate licensing portal and/or paper processes)

Certain topics may cross one or more boards, but licensees and the public don't have an easy way to communicate across multiple boards

Boards dealing with issues impacting other boards lack understanding or a process to communicate to other boards

Funding structure for OPLC is strained due to legislative requirements

Members of the public do not have access to board materials to follow along or effectively comment on policy issues

Lack of clarity as to the division of authority and responsibility between the OPLC and the boards

Opportunities

RFP and funding for a new licensing portal

Increased staffing and support for administrative rules processes

Increased awareness for need to standardize licensing process across boards

[Committee to study and make recommendations to the OPLC and the licensure of professions under boards, councils and commissions within the office](#)

Threats

Lack of quorums leads to cancelled meetings, which impacts licensees.

Limited number of interested individuals to serve on boards.

Very difficult to find appropriate “public members” to serve on boards.

Boards unable to answer questions from licensees about scope of practice. Told to submit declaratory ruling requests, which is a laborious and time-consuming process.

Inspectors are not allowed to provide opinions or suggestions to licensees, which comes across as punitive instead of supportive.

Customer service in the licensing area is limited due to lack of staffing.

Committee to study and make recommendations to the OPLC and the licensure of professions under boards, councils and commissions within the office

Summary

OPLC is an integral part of New Hampshire’s healthcare workforce development infrastructure. It is imperative that OPLC be at the table of implementing the strategic goals outlined in the Giving Care report. Likewise, stakeholders must support and engage in OPLC’s work to further its goals of enhancing customer service, increasing licensure portability and fulfilling statutory and regulatory requirements. There are many more opportunities for alignment than there are obstacles. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the healthcare industry, policy makers and regulators to work together to reduce or remove the weaknesses and threats to ensure the strengths and opportunities to create a better OPLC are fulfilled.



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