

Licensing of Health Care Professionals

White Paper prepared by MHA

January 2012

Background

Ensuring an adequate supply of health care professionals is one of the major challenges facing Montana's health care system. The lack of qualified nurses and other professionals requires health care organizations to hire temporary workers – often at two-to-three times the cost of permanent employees.

In view of the fact that labor accounts for more than 50 percent of hospitals' and nursing homes' costs, higher labor costs help drive up overall health care costs.

In today's labor market, health care professionals often are recruited to work in Montana from other states. Under current law, these health care professionals must obtain a Montana license before they can practice – a process that can sometimes take months to complete.

MHA's Proposals

MHA suggests two proposals that, in our view, would make this process more efficient.

- **Multistate Licensure Agreements.** As this concept implies, states would recognize the license of a health care professional licensed in another state – provided both states' licensure requirements are the same.

The multistate nurse licensure compact is the most advanced application of this concept. Model legislation has been prepared and RNs can move quickly between states where it has been adopted.

Similar agreements could be worked out for other licensed health care professionals.

To Do:

- Review with Board of Nursing administrative requirements for implementing the nurse licensure compact.
 - Legislation to adopt the multistate RN licensure compact in Montana.
 - Task other health care professional licensing boards to identify opportunities for multistate licensure.
- **Timely Processing of Professional License Applications.** In view of the high demand for health care professionals, timely processing of licensure applications can make the difference between an applicant working in Montana or another state. In a number of cases, however, the relevant licensure board has failed to expeditiously consider a license applicant.

To Do:

- Require through administrative rule professional licensing boards to consider applications with a time-certain.