

Removing Barriers to Practice and Care

Health care in the United States is changing rapidly. Our population is aging and a growing number of Americans have health conditions that require more complex care than ever before. The supply of providers has not kept pace with the rising demand for health care: 84 million Americans live in areas with a shortage of primary care providers.

How Nurses Can Help

Nurse practitioners and other types of advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) are highly educated and qualified clinicians with the potential to ease the provider shortage. Removing restrictions on APRNs to allow them to practice to the full extent of their education and training would increase consumer access to health care and reduce unnecessary health care costs. In most states, however, outdated legal hurdles limit this potential.

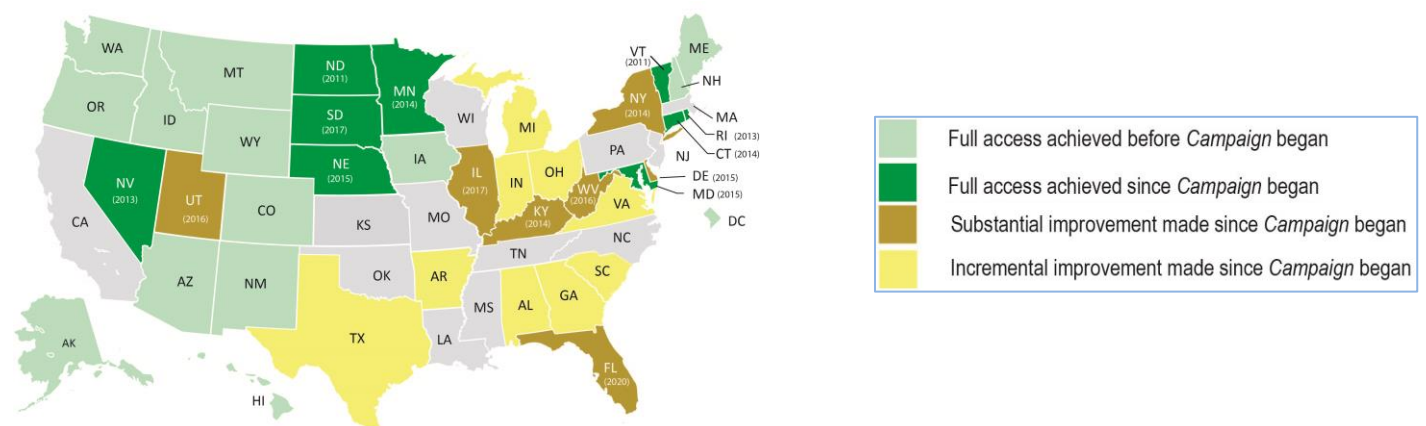
These barriers often delay care to consumers, especially in rural and urban underserved areas where few clinicians are available to meet patient needs. Delays in care not only hurt consumers, but place added stress on family caregivers, who are all too often overwhelmed with providing and overseeing the care of a loved one. APRNs can provide consumers and their caregivers with access to convenient, cost-effective, and high-quality care.

We just need to remove the barriers.

Consumers in 28 states have limited access to nurse practitioners due to state laws that prevent these clinicians from working to the full extent of their education and training—the same qualifications that have prepared these nurses to serve consumers in 22 states and the District of Columbia.

Progress to Date

Since the *Campaign for Action* began, nine states have removed statutory barriers that restrict nurse practitioners from providing more care, which in turn has increased consumers' access to health care. An additional seven states have made substantial improvements to increase consumers' access to care.



Major Publications in Support of Removing Barriers to Practice and Care

The turning tide of legislation coincides with the publication of several reports, journal articles, and news coverage that recommend states remove outdated barriers to APRN practice and care. Such publications include:

- Americans for Prosperity and Concerned Veterans for America, *The Nurse Practitioner Solution* (2019).
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of the Treasury, U.S. Department of Labor. *Reforming America's Healthcare System Through Choice and Competition* (2018)

- American Enterprise Institute *Nurse Practitioners: A Solution to America's Primary Care Crisis* (2018).
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation *Charting Nursing's Future: The Case for Removing Barriers to APRN Practice* (2017).
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE): "Impact of State Scope of Practice Laws and Other Factors on the Practice and Supply of Primary Care Nurse Practitioners" (2015).
- RAND Corporation: *Independent Assessment of the Health Care Delivery Systems and Management Processes of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Assessment B (Health Care Capabilities)* (2015).
- Federal Trade Commission: "Policy Perspectives: Competition and the Regulation of Advanced Practice Nurses" (2014).
- National Governors Association: "The Role of Nurse Practitioners in Meeting Increased Demand for Primary Care," (2012).
- Institute of Medicine: *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (2011).

Legislative Activity in the States

State legislatures are increasingly turning to APRNs to improve access to high-quality care and reduce health care costs in their states. Below are states that are or have worked on favorable legislation in 2020:

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| • California | • Massachusetts | • Oklahoma |
| • Florida | • Mississippi | • Pennsylvania |
| • Georgia | • Missouri | • South Dakota |
| • Indiana | • New Jersey | • Tennessee |
| • Kansas | • New York | • Texas |
| • Kentucky | • North Carolina | • West Virginia |
| • Louisiana | • Ohio | • Wisconsin |

Federal Activity

Section 5 of the President's October 2019 Executive Order "Protecting and Improving Medicare for Our Nation's Seniors" proposes eliminating supervision requirements, conditions of participation, and "all other licensure requirements of the Medicare program that limit professionals from practicing at the top of their profession." In a major win for American veterans, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in December 2016 issued a final rule authorizing APRNs (not including CRNAs) to practice to the full extent of their education and training in VA facilities, regardless of state laws.

In October 2018, the President signed into law H.R. 6, the "SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act," a major package of legislative changes designed to tackle the national opioids crisis. Among other changes, the new law gives permanent authority for NPs to provide medication assisted therapy (MAT) to those being treated for opioid addiction. The law also gives temporary authority (expiring 10/1/23) to CRNAs, CNMs and CNSs to provide MAT. The new authority must be consistent with any State law governing APRN practice authority.

How We Can Help You and How to Contact Us

Looking to get involved? AARP staff members at the Center to Champion Nursing in America are happy to connect you with the organizations in your state, like the Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action* Action Coalition or AARP state office that is working to remove barriers to APRN practice and care. We can also provide guidance, talking points, and assistance with letters of support, opinion pieces, and testimony. Here's how to contact us:

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