



Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an interstate compact?

An interstate compact is a contract between two or more states creating an agreement on a particular policy issue, adopting a certain standard or cooperating on regional or national matters. Compacts are the most powerful, durable and adaptive tools for ensuring cooperative action among states. Unlike the rigid and often unfunded mandates imposed by the federal government, interstate compacts provide a state-developed structure for collaborative action and consensus-building among states and federal partners.

How many professions use an interstate compact to facilitate interstate practice?

Currently, licensure compacts exist for nurses, physicians, physical therapists, psychologists, emergency management personnel, speech-language pathologists and audiologists. Licensure compacts for physician assistants, counselors, and advanced practice nurses are under development.

Are all occupational licensure compacts the same?

Not exactly, but most are similar in form and function. There are two types of occupational licensure compacts – the *expedited licensure* model and the *mutual recognition* model. The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact is the only expedited licensure compact. The remaining licensure compacts utilize the mutual recognition model, in which a practitioner’s home state license is “mutually recognized” by other compact member states. Mutual recognition model compacts allow a practitioner to practice in the compact member states either using a multi-state license or by obtaining a “compact privilege” (see below).

How does the Occupational Therapy (OT) Compact work?

The OT Compact is a mutual recognition model compact similar in form and function to occupational licensure compacts for nursing, physical therapy, psychologists, speech-language pathologists and audiologists. The OT Compact allows OTs and Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) to practice in all other compact member states – either in-person or via telehealth – through a *compact privilege*, which is equivalent to a license.

The OT Compact establishes an interstate commission, made up of delegates from compact member states, to administer the Compact. The OT Compact also creates a licensure data system for Compact member state boards to communicate and exchange information, including verification of licensure and disciplinary sanctions. A compact commission and data system are standard features of all occupational licensure compacts.

What is a “compact privilege”?

A compact privilege is the authorization to practice in a compact member state other than your home state. To be eligible for a compact privilege, you must hold an active OT or OTA license in your home state (which must be a member of the compact) and meet other eligibility criteria, such as having no disciplinary action against your license for at least two years. When eligibility is verified, jurisprudence requirements are met, and all fees are paid, you receive the compact privilege and may begin legally working in the new state.

Can both occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants obtain compact privileges?

Yes, eligible OTs and OTAs can purchase compact privileges.

What are the requirements for a compact privilege?

An OT or OTA must notify the Compact Commission of their intent to seek the compact privilege in another compact state; and meet the following criteria to get a compact privilege:

- Have a Social Security Number or a National Provider Identifier
- Hold a valid license in their home state that is a member of the Compact
- Have no encumbrances on any state license currently, and no adverse actions or restrictions against any license within the previous two years
- Pass an FBI Fingerprint-Based Criminal Background Check
- Meet any jurisprudence requirements for the member state in which they are seeking a privilege
- Pay any fees for the Compact privilege

Compact privilege holders must adhere to the laws and regulations of the Compact member state in which they are practicing and report to the Commission any adverse action taken by a non-member state within 30 days after the action is taken.

Does a compact privilege allow the privilege holder to practice via telehealth in a remote state?

A compact privilege allows the privilege holder to practice occupational therapy in another member state under the scope of practice of the state where the patient/client is located, whether the practice is in person or via telehealth. Compact privilege holders should consult the rules and laws for the state in which they wish to practice to determine the specific telehealth requirements.

Do OTs and OTAs have to complete continuing education requirements in states where they are practicing via compact privilege?

No. OTs and OTAs are only responsible for completing continuing education requirements for their home state license.

Do OTs and OTAs need a separate compact privilege for each state in which they want to provide occupational therapy services?

Yes. A compact privilege is not a multi-state license. A practitioner will need to get a compact privilege in *each* state in which they want to provide occupational therapy services.

A practitioner may work legally in a *member* state via either a license or a compact privilege. A practitioner will need to hold a state-specific license to practice in *non-member* states.

What are the advantages of the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact?

The OT Compact allows eligible OTs and OTAs to practice in all states that join the Compact. It removes the need for practitioners to get a license in each Compact state where they want to practice. The goal of the OT Compact, like all licensure compacts, is to eliminate barriers to practice and to patient care by ensuring cooperation among member-state regulatory boards.

Other benefits include:

- Preserving and strengthening state licensure systems
- Enhancing public safety
- Improving access to occupational therapy services
- Increasing market opportunities for OTs and OTAs by authorizing both in-person practice and telehealth
- Enhancing mobility of OT practitioners
- Supporting relocating military spouses
- Improving continuity of care when clients travel or relocate
- Encouraging cooperation among Compact member states in regulating the practice of occupational therapy

How can a state/jurisdiction become a member of the OT Compact?

Each state's legislature must enact the OT Compact language into law to become a member of the Compact.

Why is the OT Compact important to consumers?

Through the OT Compact, consumers have greater access to care. The OT Compact allows licensed occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) to provide continuity of care as clients/patients relocate. OTs and OTAs also will be able to reach populations that are currently underserved, geographically isolated or lack specialty care.

Additionally, states gain a supplementary layer of oversight of OTs and OTAs who may enter their state to practice occupational therapy. The OT Compact data system will allow member states to verify instantaneously that OTs and OTAs have met defined standards and competencies to practice under the Compact and are in good standing with other states' regulatory boards. The OT Compact data system will help states better protect the public.

The Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact is a joint initiative by AOTA and NBCOT®