

Respiratory Therapy & the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact (RCIC)

What is Respiratory Therapy?

Respiratory Therapists (RTs) are highly trained healthcare professionals who specialize in evaluating, treating, and caring for patients with heart and lung disorders. RTs work in hospitals, emergency departments, long-term care facilities, air and ground transport, sleep centers, and home care settings. RTs are critical members of the healthcare team who manage life-supporting equipment like ventilators, administer oxygen and aerosolized medications, and respond to life-threatening emergencies.

There are more than 130,000 licensed respiratory therapists nationwide. These clinicians play an essential role in treating patients with conditions such as asthma, COPD, pneumonia, ARDS, and COVID-19.

What is the RCIC:

The Respiratory Care Interstate Compact (RCIC) is an interstate licensure agreement that allows respiratory therapists who hold an active, unencumbered license in one member state to practice in other member states through a “compact privilege.” The compact reduces redundant licensing barriers while preserving each state’s authority to regulate the practice of respiratory care and protect public safety.

Simply put: The RCIC makes it easier for qualified RTs, including those who are military or in military families, to move, work, and provide care across state lines — safely and efficiently.

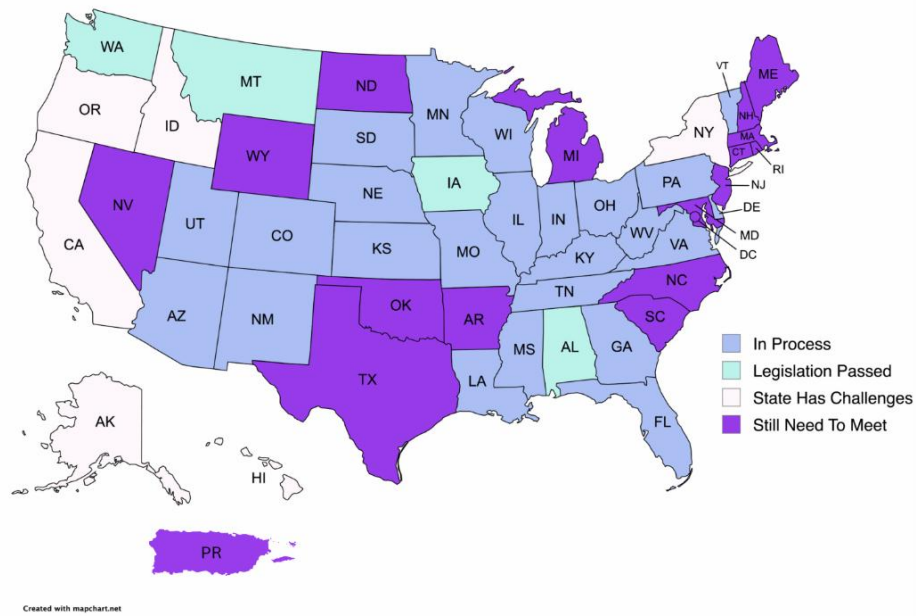
Why It Matters

- 1. Expands Access to Care:** Patients benefit from improved continuity and access to respiratory care — especially in rural, underserved, or emergency settings.
- 2. Strengthens Public Health Readiness:** The RCIC improves workforce mobility during health crises, such as pandemics or natural disasters, when rapid deployment of RTs is essential.
- 3. Reduces Administrative Burden:** Streamlines multi-state licensure for both practitioners and state boards through shared data systems and cooperative regulation.
- 4. Supports Military Families:** Active-duty military members and spouses can retain their home-state license and practice as they relocate, without additional licensing delays or fees.
- 5. Promotes Workforce Development:** Addresses staffing shortages by enabling states to recruit and retain qualified respiratory therapists more easily.

Key Facts

- The RCIC is modeled after other successful healthcare compacts (e.g., nurses, PTs, OTs, physicians).
- It enhances data sharing among states for licensure and disciplinary actions.
- The Department of Defense supports the RCIC to improve license portability for military families.

- Once seven states enact the compact, it becomes operational. Current Status:



In Summary

The Respiratory Care Interstate Compact strengthens patient access, workforce mobility, and emergency readiness — all while maintaining state oversight and public safety. By joining the RCIC, our state helps ensure that highly qualified respiratory therapists can deliver care wherever patients need it most.

Lastly, prior to beginning this conversation, the Kentucky Society for Respiratory Care in collaboration with the Kentucky Board for Respiratory Care distributed a survey to our members & licensees to understand the desires of the respiratory therapists in Kentucky to move forward with participation in the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact (RCIC) legislation. Our results as of 10/13/2025 are as follows:

- 98% (n=518) of respondents favor KY participating in the RCIC legislation
- 10% of respondents are members of the military, veteran, or a spouse/partner of a military community member.
- The only concerns shared with the society regarding this legislation were regarding costs & continuing education requirements, both of which are undetermined at this point and will be established once the RCIC Commission is established.