

# Public Charge & Public Benefits for Immigrant Families

## Keep Getting the Help You Need

Updated September 2019

New changes to “public charge” could make it harder for some immigrants to get a green card or visa, but immigrant families can continue safely receiving public benefits they’re eligible for.



### What are public charge & public benefits?

**Public charge** is one of many requirements to apply for a green card or visa, and considers whether an immigrant is likely to use certain public benefits.

**Public benefits** are government programs for U.S. citizens and some immigrants to help pay for housing, food, health care, and other living expenses.

**Public charge does not apply to you if:** you’re not eligible for a green card or don’t plan to apply for one you already have a green card, you’re renewing a green card, or applying to naturalize you have or you are applying for refugee status, asylum, a T-visa, U-visa, SIJS or VAWA



### What if my family is getting public benefits?

**Benefits your children receive will not affect your ability to apply for a green card**

- Benefits that you get for your children or other family members, are different than benefits you get for yourself. Only benefits you get for yourself can be considered by the government.

**Benefits you receive for yourself are very unlikely to affect your ability to apply for a green card.**

- You can continue to get Emergency (ESO) Medicaid or MOMS for pregnant women without it affecting your green card application.
- Very few immigrants who are eligible for other public benefits will be affected by these changes to public charge.



## What if public charge applies to me?

Under public charge, the government considers whether a green card or visa applicant used cash assistance (like FIP or SSI) and long-term institutionalized care. The new changes will also consider a green card/visa applicant's use of *Medicaid (except for emergency), FAP/Food Stamps, and Section 8 housing vouchers, rental assistance and public housing*. Remember, most green card or visa applicants are not affected by the new benefits considerations because most are not eligible for these benefits.

**Talk to an immigration attorney if:** you're applying for a green card ~ you're applying for a visa at U.S. Consulate abroad ~ you have a green card and are planning to travel outside the U.S.

**Changes will not take effect until October 15, or later.**



## Know your rights when applying for public benefits

### Applying in general

- You have the right to a free interpreter.
- The privacy of your personal information is protected by law.
- It is against the law for any government official to intimidate or harass you because you were not born in the U.S.

### Applying for your family

- DHHS requires income information for everyone in your family, even if they are undocumented and not applying for benefits.
- You can apply for benefits for your eligible children or spouse even if you don't have a SSN; leave it blank on the application.



## How can I find out more?

**Have questions?** Call MIRC's free and confidential intake line : (734) 239-6863.

