

Some families worry that using public benefits could hurt their chance to get a green card. This paper can help you learn more about your situation and the public programs that will not impact your immigration status.

The following government programs **will not affect your immigration status and immigration application:**



- Medicaid and other health care (except long-term institutional care)
- CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program



- SNAP food assistance
- WIC
- Free or reduced school lunches
- Food banks or free meals



- COVID testing, treatment and vaccines
- Pandemic economic impact payments (stimulus checks)



- Earned income and child tax credits



- Section 8 and Public Housing
- Shelters

## WHAT IS PUBLIC CHARGE?

Some people who apply for a green card (Lawful Permanent Resident status) or a visa to enter the U.S. must pass a "public charge" test, which looks at whether they are likely to depend primarily on the government for support in the future.

Immigration officials look at a person's whole situation, including their age, income, health, education or skills, and family situation. This includes whether a family member or another person with enough income or resources has promised to support you. **Only 2 kinds of public benefits are considered in the public charge test:**

1. Cash assistance programs that provide on-going payments. Examples include "SSI," "TANF," and "General Assistance."
2. Long-term institutional care, like a nursing home, at government expense.

# DOES PUBLIC CHARGE APPLY TO ME?

## Are you and your family members U.S. citizens?

Public charge does NOT apply to you. You should continue to use programs you are eligible for.



## Do you and your family members already have green cards?

Public charge does NOT apply to you when you renew your green card or apply to become a U.S. Citizen. However, it may apply if you leave the country for more than 6 months. Talk with an immigration attorney if you are planning to take a long trip outside the U.S.



## Are you applying for or do you have one of the following statuses: TPS, U or T Visa, Asylum or Refugee status, or Special Immigrant Juvenile Status?

Public charge does NOT apply to you. If you already have or are in the process of applying for one of these immigration statuses, you can use any government programs that you qualify for.



## Do you plan to apply for a family-based green card?

Public charge may apply. Your income, age, health, education, skills, family situation, and sponsor's affidavit of support will be considered to see if you are likely to become a public charge in the future. The only kinds of benefits considered in a public charge test are: cash assistance programs that provide on-going payments to the person applying (not their child or other family member, unless it is the applicant's only income), and long-term institutional care like in a nursing home paid for by the government. Speak to a knowledgeable immigration attorney before submitting any immigration-related application.



# WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more resources, go to [pifcoalition.org](https://pifcoalition.org)

Get a free, personalized screening. Visit [www.keepyourbenefits.org](https://www.keepyourbenefits.org).

To review the full USCIS overview of public charge resources, visit <https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-processes-and-procedures/public-charge/public-charge-resources>.

