

## ***Important information on changes to immigration rules on public benefits***

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On March 9, 2021, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services agency [announced](#) it will no longer use the August 2019 Public Charge Rule and will instead revert to the [1999 interim field guidance](#) on public charge inadmissibility. We have reviewed the changes and want to provide accurate, reliable information for individuals and families who may be impacted.

- Programs and services administered by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services will remain in place and are accessible to people who are eligible.
- DSHS continues to protect the confidentiality of clients' personal information and does not share this information unless required by state or federal law.
- Public charge does not apply to all immigrants. Every family is different and people should make the right choice for them and their families, based on their specific situation.
  - It does not impact lawful permanent residents (green card holders) applying for U.S. citizenship or naturalization.
  - It does not impact refugees and asylees, Amerasian immigrants, Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Holders, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, humanitarian parolees, victims of human trafficking (T-Visa), victim of criminal activity (U-Visa), Special Immigrant Juveniles, or Violence Against Women Act self-petitioners.
  - It may impact those applying for lawful permanent residency (“green cards”) or admission to the United States — including diversity visa immigrants and applications to renew, change or extend visas in the United States.

- Many public benefits are not part of the public charge rule. Families should feel comfortable continuing to access benefits they are eligible for that are not implicated under the new rule.
  - The public charge rule will consider cash assistance programs and long-term medical institutionalization.
  - The public charge rule will not consider any other federal or state benefits. That includes SNAP, WIC, CHIP, school lunches, Medicaid, Section 8 housing benefits, food banks, shelters and many more.
  - No changes are being made to non-cash state and local benefits.
- The rule will apply to applications for adjustments of status, extensions of stay or permanent residency that USCIS reviews on or after March 9, 2021, regardless of when the application package was received.
- Benefits received by a member of the applicant’s family are not counted for the purpose of determining the likelihood that the applicant will become a public charge. However, if the family is reliant on the family member’s benefits as its sole means of support, the applicant may be considered to have received public cash assistance. USCIS will make this determination on a case-by-case basis and upon consideration of the totality of the applicant’s circumstances.

People with questions or concerns about the impact of using public benefits on their immigration status should contact an immigration attorney. Resources may be available through one of the organizations listed on the Governor’s website: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/safe-communities/immigration-and-refugee-resources>.

Additionally, you may contact one of the following organizations for help:

- CLEAR Hotline: 888-201-1014
- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project:
  - NWIRP Seattle Office: 206-587-4009
  - NWIRP Yakima Valley (Granger) Office: 509-854-2100
  - NWIRP Wenatchee Office: 509-570-0054