

Public Charge: What You Should Know Fact Sheet

What does public charge mean?



Public charge is the term used by immigration officials to refer to people who primarily rely on government cash assistance to support their cost of day-to-day living. Today, this includes programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (or CalWorks in California) or assistance for long term nursing home care.

How might this change?

NOTHING has changed. But, there is a possibility that some health, nutrition, housing, transportation or energy assistance programs might be added to this list. These include Medicaid (also called Medi-Cal), Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Advance Premium Tax Credit which is financial assistance to help people lower their monthly premiums when buying insurance from marketplaces such as Covered California, earned income tax credit (EITC) which benefit low and moderate income parents, food stamps (called CalFresh in California), and the WIC program (nutrition assistance for Women, Infants and Children).

Who will be affected by the possible changes?

The possible changes will affect people who are applying to be lawful permanent residents (LPR or Green Card) or who are LPRs but have been out of the country for more than 6 months and are seeking to come back to the U.S.



However, **this DOES NOT include:**

- People who are applying for citizenship
- Or people who have become citizens

April 12, 2018

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It also **DOES NOT** include certain groups of immigrants, including

- Refugees
- Asylees
- Survivors of trafficking, domestic violence, or other serious crimes (T or U visa applicants/holders)
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioners
- Special immigrant juveniles
- And certain other immigrants



When might this change happen?

We do not know if or when the law may change. Once it is shared with the public we expect to have a few months to offer feedback and fight to prevent this from happening. In the meantime, if you are in any of these programs, you **should continue to stay enrolled in them and use the benefits to support your health and well-being.** Right now,

nothing has changed and only cash assistance and long term nursing home care can be considered as one of many factors when reviewing whether a person is likely to become a public charge.

How will it affect me?

Many factors are reviewed by immigration when a person might be considered a public charge, including age, health, assets, resources, income, family status, education and skills. The decision must be made based on a person's individual situation, considering many different factors and not just whether you have used any public assistance.

What should I do?

Your health and well-being is important and you should continue to participate in Medi-Cal, CHIP, food stamps, WIC, and other housing, energy and transportation programs.



Although we are not sure what the proposed rule will say, we believe that if changes happen in the future, immigration officials should not consider your current use of public assistance programs - only those you use after it becomes effective.



What can I do to stop this from happening?

Share your story. You can write a letter to share why many of these health, housing, food and other benefits are important to you and your family, and how these changes may affect you. Also ask your elected officials to speak out against these possible changes.

If you are concerned and have questions, or would like a sample letter, please call us at:

English/Other:
888.349.9695
Tagalog:
855.300.2552

Chinese:
800.520.2356
Thai:
800.914.9583

Khmer:
800.867.3126
Vietnamese:
800.267.7395

Korean:
800.867.3640