

The information provided below is based on the PIF Campaign's analysis of the final public charge rule on inadmissibility and is not legal advice. For information about a specific case, please contact an immigration expert.

To find help in your area, visit [www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory](http://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory).

## Core Community Messages

**Use of public benefits alone will not make you a public charge. Fight fear with facts: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.** The public charge rule was designed on purpose to be confusing, complicated, and scary. You have rights in this country no matter where you were born. The more we know about our rights, the harder it is for the Trump administration to scare us. We encourage you to learn more about your situation before making decisions that may harm you or your family.

**It's not over — we still have a chance to stop the rule.** Advocates are using every tool at their disposal to stop this rule from taking effect — including in the courtroom. The National Immigration Law Center and its partners have filed a lawsuit to stop this rule, and others will soon follow. We still have a chance to stop this rule from moving forward.

**This public charge inadmissibility test does *not* apply to every immigrant.** Exempt immigrants include: refugees; asylees; survivors of trafficking, domestic violence, or other serious crimes (T or U visa applicants/holders); VAWA self-petitioners; special immigrant juveniles; and certain people paroled into the U.S. Benefits received when people are in one of these statuses will not be counted against them. And lawful permanent residents (people with green cards) are not subject to a public charge test when they apply for U.S. citizenship.

**Use of public benefits will not *automatically* make you a public charge.** Immigration officials must look at all your circumstances in determining whether you are likely to become a public charge in the future. This includes your age, health, income, assets, resources, education/skills, family you must support, and family who will support you. Positive factors, like having a job or health insurance, can be weighed against negative factors, like having used certain benefits or

having a chronic illness. Either way, you will have a chance to show why you are not likely to rely on certain benefits in the future.

**This public charge test does *not* consider benefits used by family members.** Most immigrants who are applying for lawful permanent residence are not eligible for the benefits listed in the rule. And benefits used by eligible family members are not counted unless the family members are also applying for permanent residence. Health care, nutrition, and housing programs can help you and your children remain strong, productive, and stable.

**The rule does *not* consider health, nutrition, and housing benefits that are used before October 15, 2019.** Benefits that were previously excluded from the public charge test (such as Medicaid and SNAP) will be considered only if they are received after October 15, 2019. The new rule applies only to people whose application for permanent residence was filed (postmarked or submitted electronically) on or after October 15, 2019. Using benefits now can help you or your family members become healthier, stronger, and more employable in the future.

**Your personal information is protected.** Federal and state laws protect the privacy of people who apply for or receive health care coverage, nutrition, economic support, or other public benefits. Applications for public programs should not ask for information about the immigration status of people applying to get benefits for another person in their family or the household. Benefit agencies may share information with other government agencies only for purposes of administering their programs, with limited exceptions. You can provide only the information necessary and should never misrepresent anything when completing public benefit applications or dealing with any government agency.

# Background on Public Charge

## What is public charge?

“Public charge” or the “public charge test” is used by immigration officials to decide whether a person can enter the U.S. or get lawful permanent resident (LPR) status. In this test, officials look at all a person’s circumstances, including income, employment, health, education or skills, family situation, and whether a sponsor signed a contract (“affidavit of support”) promising to support the person. Officials can also look at whether a person has used specific benefit programs. **The public charge test does not apply to people with LPR status who are applying for U.S. citizenship.**

## How are public charge decisions made?

When a person applies to become an LPR, immigration officials look at all the person’s circumstances to determine if the person is likely to use one or more of the following benefits *in the future*:

- cash assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Security Income, or state or local cash assistance like General Relief)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as SNAP, food stamps, or EBT)
- public housing or Section 8 housing assistance
- Medicaid (except for emergency services, children under 21, pregnant women, and new mothers (for 60 days))

Immigration officials consider the person’s age, health, family and financial status, education, and skills. If the immigration official determines that the person is likely to become a public charge *in the future*, the official can refuse to grant the person’s application to enter the U.S. or get LPR status.

- **For immigrants applying from inside the U.S.** On August 14, 2019, the Trump administration published a new rule that changes the definition of “public charge” from a person primarily dependent on the government for support to a person who is *likely to use* one or more of the government programs listed above. The rule also adds specific details about how immigration officials will take into account the applicant’s income, health, age, education, and family status. Immigration officials may not start applying the new rule until October 15, 2019.
  - Health, nutrition, and housing benefits used before October 15, 2019, cannot be considered by immigration officials in a public charge test.
  - Programs used by your U.S. citizen children cannot be used against you in the public charge inadmissibility test, with the possible exception of cash assistance that is your family’s primary source of income.
- **For immigrants applying from outside the U.S.** In January 2018, the U.S. State Department revised its Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) section on public charge. The FAM provides guidance to government officers at U.S. embassies and consulates who decide whether to grant a person permission to enter the U.S. The new instructions do not change the definition of public charge but allow for consideration of other factors, such as the use of public benefits by applicants, their family members, and/or their sponsors. **NOTE:** We anticipate that public charge decisions for immigrants applying from outside the U.S. will be updated to look more like the changes described above.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES, VISIT**  
[www.ProtectingImmigrantFamilies.org](http://www.ProtectingImmigrantFamilies.org)