

TABLE 1

Overview of Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs

This table provides an overview of immigrant eligibility for the major federal public assistance programs. Some states provide assistance to immigrants who are not eligible for federally funded services. (December 2025)

PROGRAM	“QUALIFIED” IMMIGRANTS WHO ENTERED THE U.S. BEFORE AUG. 22, 1996	“QUALIFIED” IMMIGRANTS WHO ENTERED THE U.S. ON OR AFTER AUG. 22, 1996	“NOT QUALIFIED” IMMIGRANTS
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receiving SSI (or application pending) on Aug. 22, 1996 Qualify as disabled and were lawfully residing in the U.S. on Aug. 22, 1996¹ Lawful permanent resident with credit for 40 quarters of work^{1,2} Was granted refugee or asylum status or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, or Amerasian immigrant, but only <i>during first 7 years after status was granted</i> Citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} Veteran, active-duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ Certain American Indians born abroad 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawful permanent resident with credit for 40 quarters of work² (but must wait until 5 years after entry before applying) Was granted asylum or refugee status or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, Amerasian, victim of trafficking, or Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant status,^{***} but only <i>during first 7 years after status was granted</i> Certain Ukrainian parolees^{***} Citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} Veteran, active-duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ Certain American Indians born abroad 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receiving SSI (or application pending) on Aug. 22, 1996 Certain American Indians born abroad Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries during the first seven years after status was granted Certain Ukrainian parolees^{***}
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuban/Haitian entrant Citizen of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} Lawful Permanent Resident who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> was previously granted refugee status, asylum or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, or Amerasian immigrant^{***} has been in “qualified” immigrant status for 5 years¹ has credit for 40 quarters of work history 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuban/Haitian entrant Citizen of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} Lawful Permanent Resident who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is under age 18³ was previously granted refugee status, asylum or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, Amerasian, victim of trafficking, or Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant status,^{***} certain Ukrainian parolees^{***} 	Not Eligible

^{***} Iraqi and Afghan special immigrant visa holders (SIV) are eligible for federal benefits to the same extent as refugees. Other Afghans granted parole between July 31, 2021, and September 30, 2023 — and their spouses and children, and parents/guardians of unaccompanied children granted parole after September 30, 2022 — also are eligible for federal benefits to the same extent as refugees. Eligibility for this group continues until the end of their parole term.

^{***} Ukrainians paroled into the U.S. between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2024 — and their spouses and children, and parents, guardians or primary caregivers of unaccompanied children paroled into the U.S. after September 30, 2023 — are eligible for federal benefits to the same extent as refugees. (There is an exception for an initial resettlement program). Benefits are available to this group regardless of the length of their parole period — but eligibility continues only until their parole is terminated.

^{**} Individuals who lawfully reside in the U.S. pursuant to a Compact of Free Association (COFA).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a veteran, active-duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ • was 65 years or older and were lawfully residing in the U.S. on Aug. 22, 1996¹ • is receiving disability-related assistance^{1, 4} • is a member of Hmong or Laotian tribe during the Vietnam era, when the tribe militarily assisted the U.S.; spouse, surviving spouse, or child of tribe member¹ • Certain American Indians born abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been in “qualified” immigrant status for 5 years¹ • Has credit for 40 quarters of work history • is a veteran, active-duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ • is receiving disability-related assistance^{1, 4} • is a member of Hmong or Laotian tribe during the Vietnam era, when the tribe militarily assisted the U.S.; spouse, surviving spouse, or child of tribe member¹ • Certain American Indians born abroad 	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Eligible ^{1, †}	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were granted asylum or refugee status or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, Amerasian, victim of trafficking, or Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant status,^{5, ††} certain Ukrainian parolees^{†††} • Citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} • Veteran, active-duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ • Have been in “qualified” immigrant status for 5 years or more^{1, 5} 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries • Certain Ukrainian parolees^{†††}
Emergency Medicaid (includes labor and delivery)	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible

^{**} Individuals who lawfully reside in the U.S. pursuant to a Compact of Free Association (COFA).

[†] In Mississippi, TANF is available to immigrants who entered the U.S. prior to Aug. 22, 1996, only if they are: (1) LPRs credited with 40 quarters of work; or (2) veterans, active-duty military (and their spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child); or refugees, asylees, people granted withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrants, victims of trafficking, or Amerasian immigrants during the first five years after obtaining this status.

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Full-Scope Medicaid	Eligible	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were granted asylum or refugee status or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, Amerasian, victim of trafficking, or Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant status,^{6,***} certain Ukrainian parolees^{***} Citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} Veteran, active-duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ Receiving federal Foster Care Have been in “qualified” immigrant status for 5 years or more^{1, 6} Children under 21 (state option)⁹ Pregnant persons (state option)⁹ 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were receiving SSI on Aug. 22, 1996 (in states that link Medicaid to SSI eligibility) Certain American Indians born abroad Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries Lawfully residing children under 21 (state option)^{9,10} Lawfully residing pregnant persons (state option)⁹ Certain Ukrainian parolees^{***}
Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	Eligible	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were granted asylum or refugee status or withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrant, Amerasian, victim of trafficking, or Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant status,^{***} certain Ukrainian parolees^{***} Citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} Veteran, active duty military; spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child¹ Have been in “qualified” immigrant status for 5 years or more¹ Children under 21 (state option)⁹ Pregnant persons (state option)⁹ 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries Lawfully residing children under 21 (state option)⁹ Lawfully residing pregnant persons (state option)^{7, 9} Certain Ukrainian parolees^{***}
Medicare “Premium Free” Part A (hospitalization) (eligibility based on work history)	Eligible if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawful permanent resident Cuban/Haitian entrant Citizen of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} or Entitled to or enrolled in Medicare on July 4, 2025 (covered until Jan. 4, 2027) 	Eligible if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawful permanent resident Cuban/Haitian entrant Citizen of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau^{**} or Entitled to or enrolled in Medicare on July 4, 2025 (covered until Jan. 4, 2027) 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawfully present, and entitled to or enrolled in Medicare on July 4, 2025 (covered until Jan. 4, 2027)
Premium “Buy-in” Medicare	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawful permanent resident who has resided continuously in the U.S. for at least 5 years 	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawful permanent resident who has resided continuously in the U.S. for at least 5 years 	Not Eligible
HUD Public Housing and Section 8 Programs	Eligible except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain Cuban/Haitian entrants Note: If at least one member of the household is eligible based	Eligible except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain Cuban/Haitian entrants Note: If at least one member of the household is eligible based	Eligible only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary resident under IRCA general amnesty, or paroled into the U.S. for less than 1 year

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	on immigration status, the family may reside in the housing, but the subsidy will be prorated.	on immigration status, the family may reside in the housing, but the subsidy will be prorated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries • Certain Ukrainian parolees⁺⁺⁺ <p>Note: For other immigrants, eligibility may depend on the date the family began receiving housing assistance, the immigration status of other household members, and the household composition.</p> <p>Note also: If at least one member of the household is eligible based on immigration status, the family may reside in the housing, but the subsidy will be prorated.</p>
Title XX Block Grants	Eligible	Eligible	<p>Eligible only if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries • Certain Ukrainian parolees⁺⁺⁺ • Program or service funded by the block grant is exempt from the welfare law’s restrictions
Social Security	Eligible⁸	Eligible⁸	<p>Eligible only if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawfully present⁸ • Were receiving assistance based on an application filed before Dec. 1, 1996 • Eligibility required by certain international agreements
Other Federal Public Benefits Subject to Welfare Law’s Restrictions	Eligible	Eligible	<p>Eligible only if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries • Certain Ukrainian parolees⁺⁺⁺
Benefits Exempt from Welfare Law’s Restrictions	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible

KEY TERMS USED IN TABLE (*Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs*)

“Qualified” immigrants are: (1) lawful permanent residents (LPRs); (2) refugees, asylees, persons granted withholding of deportation/removal, conditional entry (in effect prior to Apr. 1, 1980), or paroled into the U.S. for at least one year; (3) Cuban/Haitian entrants (as defined in 45 C.F.R. § 401.2); (4) battered spouses and children with a pending or approved (a) self-petition for an immigrant visa, or (b) immigrant visa filed for a spouse or child by a U.S. citizen or LPR, or (c) application for cancellation of removal/suspension of deportation, whose need for benefits has a substantial connection to the battery or cruelty (parent/child of such battered child/spouse are also “qualified”);

(5) victims of trafficking and their derivative beneficiaries who have obtained a T visa or whose application for a T visa sets forth a *prima facie* case. (A broader group of trafficking victims who are certified by or receive an eligibility letter from the Office of Refugee Resettlement are eligible for benefits funded or administered by federal agencies, without regard to their immigration status); and (6) Individuals who lawfully reside in the U.S. pursuant to a Compact of Free Association (COFA).

“Not qualified” immigrants include all noncitizens who do not fall under the “qualified” immigrant categories.

NOTES

- 1 Eligibility may be affected by deeming: a sponsor's income/resources may be added to the immigrant's in determining eligibility. Exemptions from deeming may apply.
- 2 LPRs are eligible if they have worked 40 qualifying quarters in the U.S. Immigrants also get credit toward their 40 quarters for work performed (1) by parents when the immigrant was under 18; and (2) by spouse during the marriage (unless the marriage ended in divorce or annulment). No credit is given for a quarter worked after Dec. 31, 1996, if a federal means-tested public benefit (SSI, food stamps, TANF, Medicaid, or CHIP) was received in that quarter.
- 3 Children are not subject to sponsor deeming in the SNAP program.
- 4 Disability-related benefits include SSI, Social Security disability, state disability or retirement pension, railroad retirement disability, veteran's disability, disability-based Medicaid, and disability-related General Assistance if the disability determination uses criteria as stringent as those used by federal SSI.
- 5 In Indiana, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas, TANF is available only to immigrants who entered the U.S. on or after Aug. 22, 1996, who are: (1) LPRs credited with 40 quarters of work; (2) veterans, active-duty military (and their spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child); or (3) refugees, asylees, persons granted withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrants, victims of trafficking, and Amerasian immigrants during the five years after obtaining this status. Indiana provides TANF to "refugees" listed in (3) regardless of the date they obtained that status and does not provide benefits to post-Aug. 22, 1996 entrants listed in (1). Mississippi does not address eligibility for Cuban/Haitian entrants or Amerasian immigrants.
- 6 All states provide Medicaid to "qualified" immigrant veterans, active duty military (and their spouse, unremarried surviving spouse, or child) regardless of their date of entry into the U.S. A few states deny Medicaid to qualified immigrants who entered the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996, unless they are LPRs credited with 40 quarters of work (MS, MT, ND, SC, SD, TX), and/or limit eligibility for refugees, asylees, persons granted withholding of deportation/removal, Cuban/Haitian entrants, trafficking survivors, persons granted Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant status or Amerasian immigrants, to the *seven-year period after obtaining this status* (AL, MS, MT, SC, TX, VA, WV). In Texas and Alabama, Amerasian immigrants are eligible only during the five years after obtaining this status. However, South Carolina provides Medicaid to people granted withholding of removal, without a time limit; South Carolina and Montana provide Medicaid to other "qualified" immigrants who have credit for 40 quarters of work history in the U.S.; Wyoming provides full-scope Medicaid to "qualified" abused immigrants and persons paroled into the U.S. regardless of their date of entry into the U.S.; and several of these states provide Medicaid to lawfully residing children (MT, ND, SC, TX, VA, WV) or pregnant people (ND, SC, WV, WY) regardless of their date of entry. South Dakota, Texas, and Virginia offer prenatal care regardless of the pregnant person's immigration status under the CHIP option referenced in note 7, below.
- 7 In states that elect the CHIP program's option, prenatal care is available regardless of the pregnant person's immigration status. The scope of coverage depends in part on how the option is implemented.
- 8 As defined in 8 C.F.R. § 1.3. For applications based on Social Security numbers issued on or after Jan. 1, 2004: Must have been assigned a Social Security number that was, at the time assigned or at any later time, valid for work purposes. Alternatively, must have been admitted to the U.S. temporarily for business or as a crewman when the relevant work quarters were earned.
- 9 For a list of states providing medical assistance to additional categories of immigrants, either with state funds or under the option (a) to provide federal Medicaid and CHIP to lawfully residing children and pregnant persons regardless of their date of entry into the U.S. or (b) to provide prenatal care regardless of the pregnant person's immigration status, under the CHIP option, see the table "Medical Assistance Programs for Immigrants in Various States," at <https://www.nilc.org/issues/health-care/medical-assistance-various-states/>. For a definition of "lawfully residing" for the purpose of Medicaid and CHIP coverage of children and pregnant persons, see letter from Cindy Mann, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), to state health officials, Re: Medicaid and CHIP Coverage of "Lawfully Residing" Children and Pregnant Women (July 1, 2010), at www.cms.gov/smdl/downloads/SHO10006.pdf. See also CMS letter to state health officials, Re: Individuals with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (Aug. 28, 2012), at www.medicaid.gov/Federal-Policy-Guidance/downloads/SHO-12-002.pdf.