

Important information on changes to immigration rules on public benefit

The State of Washington's Department of Social and Health Services understands that the federal Department of Homeland Security has published final rules that could apply to people who receive specified public benefits. We have reviewed the rules and want to provide accurate, reliable information for individuals and families who may be impacted by changing policies. Here is what we know:

- Programs and services administered by the State of Washington 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.
- The changes may impact certain people 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.
- The rule does not impact lawful permanent residents applying for U.S. citizenship or naturalization.
- This new rule does not apply to all immigrants. It does not apply to people who are refugees and asylees, Amerasian immigrants, Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Holders, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, humanitarian parolees, victims of human trafficking (T-Visa), victims of criminal activity (U-Visa), Special Immigrant Juveniles or VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) self-petitioners.
- Previously, officials would only count a client's use of cash assistance or long-term medical institutionalization when considering their immigration application. The changes will add certain federal health care, nutrition and housing benefits.
- The rule will not apply retroactively to benefits that were received before the rule's effective date. These additional federal benefits will only be considered if a person applied for, was certified for or received benefits after the rule becomes effective. Currently, the rule is expected to become effective October 15, 2019.

- The changes will not apply to all types of federal benefits. For a list of benefits that are included or excluded, see the Frequently Asked Questions. NO changes are being made to state benefits, although state and local cash assistance will continue to be considered.
- It does not count the use of benefits by a person's family members. The use of benefits by children or other household members will not be counted against an individual applying for lawful permanent residency (green card) or admission to the United States.

Individuals and families who have 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: 1-888-201-1014
- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP):
 - NWIRP Seattle Office: 206-587-4009
 - NWIRP Yakima Valley (Granger) Office: 509-854-2100
 - NWIRP Wenatchee Office: 509-570-0054