

ATTENTION IMMIGRANTS!

Receipt of Health Care, Food Stamps, and other Non-cash Benefits Will Not Hurt Your Chances of Getting a Green Card!

The U.S. government recently has released information on a policy called “public charge” that describes when receiving public benefits may affect your immigration status or ability to travel outside of the U.S.

1. Your use of health programs such as MassHealth, Children’s Medical Security Plan, Healthy Start or other health services will not prevent you from getting a green card, unless you are using the health care to pay for a nursing home or other long-term institutionalized care.
2. Your use of food stamps, WIC, public housing and other non-cash benefits will not prevent you from getting a green card.
3. Your child’s or family member’s use of public benefits (including cash welfare) will not prevent you from getting a green card, unless the cash welfare is your family’s only income.
4. Your use of cash welfare, like SSI, TAFDC or EAEDC might prevent you from getting a green card, but it depends on your situation. If you are receiving, or have received, cash assistance, you should see a lawyer before you apply for a green card.
5. If you have a green card, use of any benefits will not prevent you from becoming a citizen.
6. If you have a green card and are receiving cash welfare (SSI, TAFDC, EAEDC) you should not travel outside of the U.S. for more than 180 days (about 6 months).
7. Your use of public benefits will not prevent you from sponsoring your relative, but you and/or a co-sponsor will need to meet an income test.
8. Refugees and asylees (and certain other groups of immigrants) may use all government benefits (cash and non-cash) without it affecting their chances of getting a green card. Call an advocate or lawyer if you have questions.

If you have any questions about how receipt of benefits may affect your immigration status, call an immigration lawyer. If you need a referral to a lawyer, call the Massachusetts Bar Association at 800-392-6164.

Created by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) in collaboration with the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)

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