

Benefits from California: Public Benefits



Neighborhood Legal Services
of Los Angeles County

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)



DPSS is a County-based agency. They offer various programs and services to low-income families and individuals. DPSS is responsible for administering and distributing many of the public benefits programs available in Los Angeles.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is the State's Health and Human Services Agency department that oversees DPSS.



Health Programs

What is Medi-Cal?

Medi-Cal is the name for California's Medicaid health care program, supported by federal and state taxes. It is a health program designed to help cover medical costs for qualified people who have limited income and resources. The program varies by state and usually has minimal cost-sharing.

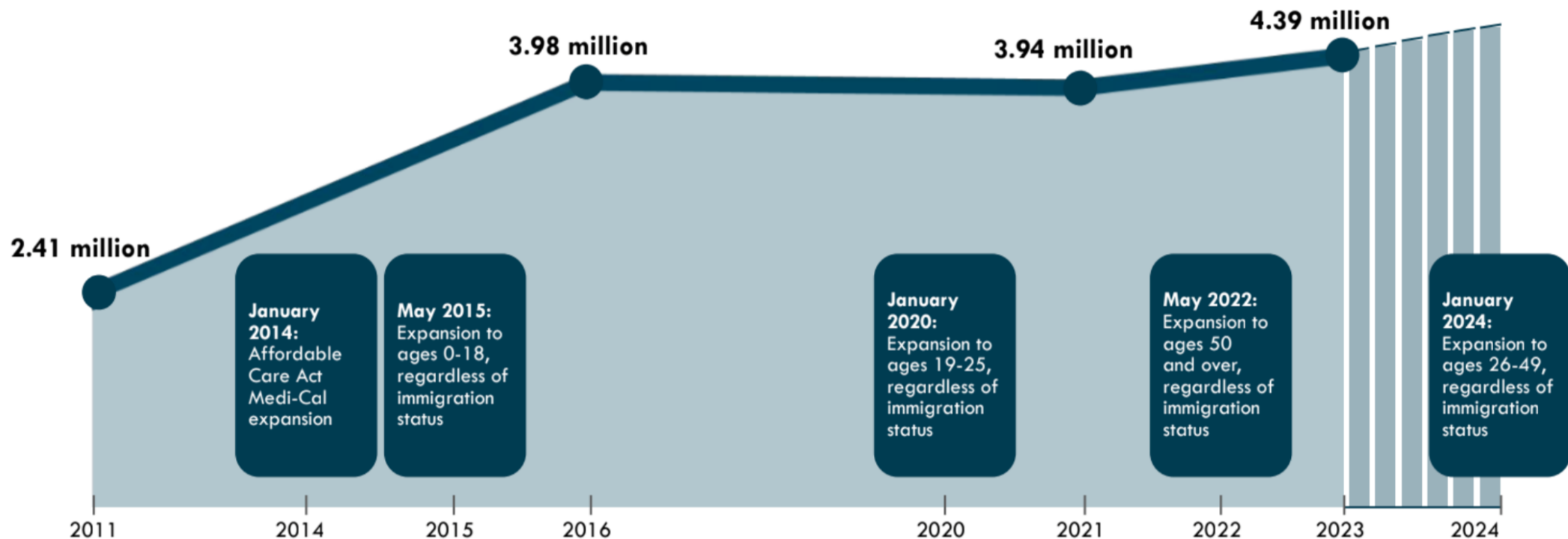
It is different from **Medicare**, which is a federal health insurance program for people 65 or older (or under 65 with certain disabilities).

Medi-Cal Adult Expansion

#Health4All 

Expands full-scope Medi-Cal to adults ages 26 and to 49 regardless of immigration status effective **January 1, 2024**! An estimated 700,000 additional adults will benefit from the expansion.

More LA County residents are enrolled in Medi-Cal.**



What Benefits are Covered by Full Scope Medi-Cal?

- Long term care: long-term care received in a hospital or nursing facility, such as nursing home or skilled nursing facility
- Treatment therapies – chemotherapy, radiation therapy, etc.
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS): benefit that lets a person select their own caregiver to provide services in the home to help an individual live at home instead of a nursing facility. Helps with daily activities such as cooking, personal care, laundry, meal preparation.
- Home and Community Based Services: services and supports that help older adults and people with disabilities live in their home safely instead of a nursing facility

What Does Full-Scope Medi-Cal Cover?

USE YOUR SAME BIC (MEDI-CAL) CARD, if you have one, for the services below. Don't throw it away!

- Outpatient (Ambulatory) services
- Emergency services
- Hospitalization
- Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder services
- Prescription Drugs
- Transportation
- Podiatry
- Vision (eyeglasses) and hearing aids
- Physical and occupational therapy and devices
- Laboratory services
- Preventive and wellness services and chronic disease management
- Dental care
- In-home services and supports (65, or disabled or blind)
- Chiropractic
- And more – this is NOT a complete list – anything medically necessary should be covered!

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

What is it?

- Pays In-Home Care Workers so People Can Live Independently
- Linked to Full-Scope Medi-Cal
- Requirements:
 - Disabled Child or Adult
 - Medi-Cal eligibility determination
 - California Resident
 - Not available for individuals who are homeless



Who may be eligible?

- Same as Medi-Cal
- Lawful Permanent Residents
- Asylees, Refugees, U and T Visa applicants and holders, VAWA, Cuban and Haitian entrants, individuals paroled into US for at least one year
- PRUCOL (Persons Residing Under Color of Law) - includes DACA and TPS recipients
- Starting 2024 – everyone, regardless of immigration status!

If Medi-Cal is Cut Off

- When Medi-Cal ends, people have **90 days** to turn in missing renewal info.
 - County must accept info. as timely received and restore Medi-Cal without a gap
- Request State fair hearing



Nutrition Programs

What is CalFresh?



- Known federally as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- Known as CalFresh in the state of California
- eligibility determined by income and expenses
- monthly benefits loaded onto EBT card



Oct. 2024 to Sept. 2025 INCOME ELIGIBILITY

Household Size	CalFresh Maximum Monthly Allotment	Gross Monthly Income Eligibility Limits / IRT for SAR Households (130% FPL)	Net Monthly Income Eligibility Limits (100% FPL)	Gross Monthly Income Limits for Households Where Elderly/Disabled Are A Separate Household (165% FPL)	Gross Monthly Income Eligibility Limit for <u>MCE</u> Households (200% FPL)
1	\$292	\$1,632	\$1,255	\$2,071	\$2,510
2	\$536	\$2,215	\$1,704	\$2,811	\$3,408
3	\$768	\$2,798	\$2,152	\$3,551	\$4,304
4	\$975	\$3,380	\$2,600	\$4,290	\$5,200
5	\$1,158	\$3,963	\$3,049	\$5,030	\$6,098
6	\$1,390	\$4,546	\$3,497	\$5,770	\$6,994
7	\$1,536	\$5,129	\$3,945	\$6,510	\$7,890
8	\$1,756	\$5,712	\$4,394	\$7,249	\$8,788
Each Additional HH Member	+ \$220	+ \$583	+ \$449	+ \$740	+ \$898

(lacounty.gov DPSS)

**NET INCOME IS THE AMOUNT OF MONEY YOU BRING HOME AFTER TAXES AND DEDUCTIONS ARE TAKEN OUT OF YOUR PAYCHECK

SNAP CALCULATOR
[HTTPS://WWW.SNAPSCREEENER.COM/SCREENER?STATE=CA](https://www.snapscreeener.com/screener?state=ca)

CalFresh + California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

Which immigrants may be eligible?

- Lawful Permanent Residents (green card holders)
 - **Don't have to wait 5 years before getting food assistance!**
- VAWA petitioner (approved or pending petition which makes a prima facie case)
- Granted Asylee/Refugee
- U- Visa applicant/holder (and derivatives)
- Trafficking survivor planning to make a T-Visa application within the year, Victim ORR certified, pending or granted T – Visa (and derivatives)
- Granted withholding of deportation/removal, conditional entry
- Paroled for at least a year
- Iraqi and Afghan special immigrant visa holders (SIV)
- American Indian born in Canada/Native American born outside U.S.
- Ukrainians paroled into the U.S. between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2023 – until parole is terminated

CalFresh "Expedited Services"

- Receive CF in 3 calendar days
- All applicants must be screened
- Qualified if you:
 - have gross income less than \$150/mo & resources less than \$100, or
 - are a migrant or seasonal farm worker and destitute, or
 - your household's combined monthly gross income and liquid resources are less than the household's monthly rent or mortgage and utility costs



Methods of Applying for CalFresh

- ONLINE through BenefitsCal



- DPSS Customer Service Center-press 2 for applications
- PAPER application in DPSS office
- Through a Community Based Organization (like BAILA!)

Maximizing CalFresh

- **Changes impacting DEDUCTIONS:**

- Did you start paying or pay more for childcare or dependent care?
- Did you start paying or pay more for child support?
- If you are age 60 or older, or have a disability, do you pay more than \$35 in medical expenses per month? If you already get a medical expense deduction, are the out-of-pocket expenses more than \$155 per month?
- Did your shelter costs go up?
- Are you homeless and have shelter costs? For example, a night in a single room occupancy or motel, paying someone to stay at their home, or paying for parking for your car to sleep in?

WIC

What is it?

- Nutrition education and counseling
- Breastfeeding services
- Monthly benefits to purchase WIC foods
- CA WIC card can be used like debit card

Who may be eligible?

- pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding
- Infants (up to 1yo)
- Children (up to 5yo)
- Fathers, grandparents, and caretakers may receive WIC food benefits for eligible infants and children
 - **No Immigration requirements!**





Cash Aid Programs

CaWORKs

What is it?

- Cash aid for families who are low-income with a child where a parent is absent, unemployed or disabled: [See current amounts here](#), resource limit (but restricted accounts)
- GAIN (domestic violence case management, school, childcare, transportation, pay for supplies/books, clothes etc. for work and school)
- State and County-funded homeless assistance

Who may be eligible?

- Citizens & LPRs (sponsor deeming for some)
- VAWA self-petitioner (at least prima facie notice)
- U/T visa applicant/holder (No SSN requirement)
- Asylee
- Refugee
- Paroled into the US
- Granted withholding of deportation
- Cuban/Haitian entrants
- Battered spouse or child with pending or approved spousal visa



CalWORKs eligibility continued

- If no adults qualify, can apply for children-only
- If caring for a family-member child and no legal custody, can still get benefits for them
- Other eligibility requirements
 - Immunization for child under 6
 - EDD cooperation
 - Provide proof of relationship, age, citizenship
 - Cooperate in child-support referral to CSSD
 - But, good cause exemption for DV (Form CW-51)
- Work requirements: GAIN
 - Good cause
 - Exemptions, Clock-stoppers and Extenders
- Apply at DPSS, calling Customer Service Center (press 2), BenefitsCal (<https://benefitscal.com/>)

CalWORKs Homeless Assistance (HA)

- **State funded Homeless Assistance:**
 - **Temporary HA:** 16 calendar days of motel vouchers
 - \$85 per day for a family of four or fewer + \$15 for each additional family member, up to \$145 daily
 - 14 more days if enrolled in WTW
 - Additional 16 days for DV (up to 32), disaster (COVID)
 - Should be issued **same day**
 - **Permanent HA:** covers costs to secure housing, like Security deposit, last month's rent, other deposits or charges (doesn't include first month)
 - Amount: no more than x2 total rent amount
 - Rent cannot exceed 80% of your income
 - **Permanent HA Arrearages:** pays for 2 months of rent arrearages, rent cannot be more than 80% income
- Apply through DPSS
- Family is eligible for these programs, even if parent is not eligible for CalWORKs (because of immigration status or other reasons)
- A Child's use of cash benefits is not considered in a public charge determination.

<https://dpss.lacounty.gov/en/cash/calworks/homeless.html>

[DPSS Epolicy Summary of CW Homeless Services](#)

County-Funded Homeless Assistance for CalWORKs: Must be GAIN-eligible

- **Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction (EAPE):**
 - Once HA exhausted: Back rent, utilities \$5k limit
- **Temporary homeless Assistance +14-** 14 additional motel days
- **Moving Assistance Program**
 - \$2,500 limit to secure housing: deposit/last month, utility deposit, stove/refrigerator purchase, truck rental
- **4-Month Rental Assistance**
 - \$500 for 4 mo if in non-sub. Housing, or 8 mo if in the GAIN Family Stabilization Program

Family Stabilization

- Provides intensive case management and crisis intervention to CalWORKs families to ensure a basic level of stability in combination with existing barrier removal services.
- FS services are available to all family members, including children and unaided adults.
 - • Can stop the Welfare-to-Work Time Clock
 - • FS addresses situations including, but not limited to: Homelessness; Domestic abuse; and/or, Mental health or substance abuse-related needs.

Other Supports

- **CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP)**
 - Money for CalWORKs families homeless/at-risk of homeless
 - Get through LAHSA agencies- family solutions centers
 - DPSS is supposed to refer you if you are homeless/at risk
 - Offers: help obtaining permanent housing, and can provide temporary shelter, help with moving costs, short to medium term rental subsidies and wrap around case management.
- **Bringing Families Home:**
 - For families involved with DCFS
 - Provide housing supports for families to reunify
- **Home Safe Program**
 - Support housing stability of older adults involved in Adult Protective Services

Welfare-to-Work 101

Work Requirements for CalWORKs Benefits

A series of horizontal lines of varying lengths and colors (teal, light blue, white) extending from the left side of the slide towards the right, positioned below the subtitle.

What is welfare-to-work?

- CalWORKs participants who are not exempt must work or participate in welfare-to-work activities
 - Requirement started in 1996 with welfare reform
- Failure to participate for the minimum number of hours without good cause means sanction

WTW Flow

Orientation

- Information about WTW, available education, employment and training programs, supportive services, etc.

Appraisal

- Initial review of client skills, barriers to self-sufficiency, need for supportive services, domestic violence, housing stability, physical and mental health (including substance abuse) and any other information needed for assessment

Job Search

- Up to 4 consecutive weeks of searching required if not employed or in education (can be shortened)

Assessment

- If not employed after job search, then an assessment is completed

WTW Plan

- Plan created based on assessment; If participant disagrees with proposed plan, can request third party assessment
- Supposed to do plan within 90 days of application
- Plan required to get supportive services

WTW activities

- Unsubsidized employment
- Subsidized private or public sector employment
- Work study
- Grant based on-the-job training
- Work experience
- Community Service
- Vocational education
- On the job training
- Job search and job readiness if 50% of hours
- Providing child care to CalWORKs recipient

WTW activities cont.

- Self-employment
 - Note now all self-employment hours count
- Adult basic education
- ESL
- Job search and job readiness
- Mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence services
- Satisfactory progress in high school or GED program

Required hours of participation

- 30 hours for single parent, 35 hours for two parent family, 20 hours for single parent with child under age 6
 - Averaged for month, but can never be more than 20/30/35 hours (ACL 14-80)

Education as WTW activity

- Now county must accept education as WTW activity at any time
- Must offer high school equivalent if no high school diploma
 - If complete high school equivalent, months doing that are unticked from time on aid clock
- SIP
 - Education program started prior to WTW appraisal.
 - Must be program to lead to employment
 - Either on county approved list or meets county standard for program to lead to employment
 - Now only relevant if attending private college

(Please switch to polling)

WTW Exemptions (Clock Stoppers)

- Long term reason (at least 30 days) why cannot participate in WTW
- Reasons may be exempt:
 - Disability
 - Means unable to meet minimum WTW requirements because of disability
 - Must be getting treatment for condition
 - Caring for ill family member
 - 60+
 - Domestic violence waiver
 - Nonparent caretaker relative of ward of the court or child at risk of foster care
 - Parent of a child under 23 months
 - Once in lifetime only
 - Living in Indian Country with over 50% unemployment

WTW Exemptions cont.

- Means months do not count toward 60 month clock
 - Clock also does not run when sanctioned
- ACL 15-08 – can get retroactive exemption if prove basis, and meet all requirements
 - For disability means show was getting treatment
- Establish exemption with CW-61 form or equivalent
- Must comply with treatment
- Counties can review status at least annually

Time Limit Exceptions/Extenders After all Months Exhausted

- See MPP 42-302- some interference in ability to participate in normal WTW activities/hours
- Include:
 - 60+
 - Providing Care:
 - Ill/incapacitated family member
 - Non-parent caretaker of child (DCFS, Kin-GAP, risk of foster care)
 - Disabled
 - Unable to maintain employment or participate (caveats)
 - Unaided
 - Domestic Violence
- Able to request at any time if child still on benefits

Persons not required to participate

- Non-needy caretaker relative
- Second parent or stepparent

Domestic Violence Waiver

- Allows waiving WTW requirements if current DV or current effects of past DV interfere with WTW participation
 - Means cannot participate full time in WTW because of current DV or present effects of past DV
 - Can voluntarily participate
- Client requests DV waiver
 - Self-certification unless reason to disbelieve
 - Issue – notice of denial of request for DV waiver
- Note – Unlike exemption, CDSS policy is only untick clock retroactively for 90 days back from when request submitted, unless can show reported DV and county didn't act

Domestic Violence waiver cont.

County should offer counseling regardless of whether waive requirements

- County must now inform of DV services verbally and in writing at application, WTW plan and annual recertification
- Issue – counties requiring counseling as a condition of a DV waiver

Good Cause

- Good cause
 - Any temporary good reason for noncompliance
 - Month counts toward 60 months if good cause for less than 1/2 of business days of month
 - Examples: lack supportive services, job or activity is discriminatory, transportation more than 2 hours round trip, job or activity violates health or safety standards, court appearance, temporary illness, homelessness

Supportive Services

- Items necessary to participate in WTW
 - Includes any mandatory meeting with county such as orientation, appraisal or assessment
- Important examples:
 - Child care; diaper benefits
 - Transportation
 - Necessary tools, clothes or supplies
 - Items required for classes (books, lab fees etc.)
- County must advance pay unless recipient agrees otherwise
- Must have WTW plan to get supportive services for assigned activity
- For education, now a flat rate for supportive services \$500 per semester for full time student.
 - Can request actual expenses if more

Sanctions

- If non-compliance with WTW Plan can sanction parent portion of benefit only
- Process is
 - 30 days notice of imposing sanction
 - 20 days to contact worker to discuss good cause
 - If good cause, no sanction, if not, then non-compliant person removed from grant until complies
- Can cure with plan to do what did not do
 - Cure plan is maximum 30 days
- Time on aid clocks do not run
- No child support assignment for long term sanctioned people (over 12 months)

General Relief

What is it?

- Cash assistance for adults without children
- Maximum grant of \$221 per month

Who may be eligible?

- Citizens
- Lawful Permanent Residents
- Refugees, asylees, persons granted withholding of deportation, parolees
- VAWA (prima facie finding), U and T Visa applicants and holders (or in appeals process)
- Cuban/Haitian Entrants

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and TCVAP

What is it?

- Temporary cash assistance (usually up to 12 months)
- Same rules/amounts as CalWORKs, but don't need to have kids

Who may be eligible?

- RCA
 - Refugee or asylee
 - Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees for 12 months
 - T-Visa Approved
- TCVAP
 - Pending U or T

Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)

What is it?

- Cash aid for 65 +/disabled immigrant, denied SSI due to immigration status
 - If applying based on disability, need to go through DDS process to prove disability
- CAPI max about \$1,182 for individual/\$2,022.83 for eligible couple
 - In-kind support rules apply

Who may be eligible?

- Lawful Permanent Residents (green card holders) who don't have 40 qualifying quarters of work (about 10 years)
- Lawful Permanent Residents in first 5 years after status granted
- Refugees, asylees, people granted withholding of deportation, Cuban/Haitian entrants, victims of trafficking can only get SSI *during first 7 years after their status was granted – **MAY be eligible for CAPI after his or her 7- year SSI eligibility period ends***
 - *THE ABOVE GROUPS NEED TO APPLY FOR SSI AND GET DENIED DUE TO IMM STATUS*
- PRUCOL
- Victims of trafficking, U Visa applicants and holders also eligible



Benefits Skimming

What is Skimming?

Skimming refers to the process thieves rely on to steal EBT benefits. A scanner is inserted into the ATM machine while a camera captures the pin number, and then the card is cloned.

New Rules - Dec 1, 2024! Take the steps below if your benefits were stolen:

1. Report the theft. You have 90 **days** from the illegal withdrawal of CalFresh benefits to request reimbursement by submitting the EBT 2259 claim form: <http://tinyurl.com/5n97bzu9>
2. Cancel your card through the EBT hotline (877) 328-9677 or the County
3. Ask the county to issue a new card.
4. File a claim. Ask the county for an "EBT 2259" claim form. This can be completed over the phone with DPSS
5. Only 2 months of CalFresh benefits can be reimbursed
6. Replacements limited to 2 requests in a 12-month period
 - The period is a fiscal year: October 1 through September 30th

The county has 10 business days to reimburse you if eligible!

See skimming flyers [here!](#)

Appealing an Adverse Action by DPSS

- If for any reason, DPSS reduces or stops your public benefits, they must send you a Notice of Action 10 days before any action is taken. You have a due process right to appeal that action within 90 days of the date of the written notice. If you appeal within 10 days of the notice, your benefits will continue until the hearing (Aid Paid Pending).
- How to appeal:
 - Online: acms.dss.ca.gov
 - Call: 800-743-8525
 - Fax: 833-281-0905
 - Mail to:
 - Appeals and State Hearings Section: 3833 S. Vermont Ave. 4th Floor Los Angeles, CA 90037
 - CDSS State Hearings Division: PO Box 944243, MS 21-37 Sacramento, CA 94244-2430
 - Email: SHDCSU@DSS.ca.gov

Barrier to Accessing Benefits: Public Charge

Common Public Charge Questions

I receive public benefits. Does that affect my immigration status or affect my options for adjusting my immigration status?

Can I be deported if I use public benefits?

Would it affect my immigration status if my US citizen children used public benefits?



Is it safe to give my information to the public benefits department when I apply for public benefits for myself or my kids?

Public Charge Does Not Apply to:

- People who are already Lawful Permanent Residents (green card holders) (unless they have given up status/been out of US for longer than 6 consecutive months)
 - *The government cannot cancel your green card for using public benefits*
- Green card holders applying for citizenship (naturalization) or renewing green card
- People who are already US Citizens
- People who are undocumented and don't have a path to a green card
- Certain types of immigrants (see next slide)



The Public Charge Test Also DOES NOT Apply To These Immigrants*

- People applying for or granted asylum, refugee status, or TPS
- Special Immigrant Juveniles (SIJS); Afghan or Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Holders
- VAWA self-petitioners, and survivors who have applied for or been granted T or U visas status
- DACA applicants and renewals
- Certain Cubans and Amerasians
- Afghan, Iraqi interpreters
- NACARA, HRIFA, and Lautenberg parolees
- People granted withholding of removal, and more!



Important clarifications in the new rule:

- **Any benefit used while in an exempt category will not be considered, even if you later seek lawful permanent residence through a pathway where public charge applies.**
- **Benefits used by people who are treated like refugees for benefits eligibility purposes, like trafficking survivors, Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa holders, and certain Afghan and Ukrainian parolees, will not be considered**

Which Public Benefits Will Be Considered in a Public Charge Test?

1. Monthly Cash Assistance

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- CalWORKs
- General Relief
- CAPI

Note: Getting stimulus checks, unemployment, and tax credits is not considered cash assistance in a public charge test

2. Long-term institutional care (like a nursing home) paid by Medi-Cal

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS - Most people who face the public charge test are not eligible for the monthly cash assistance benefits in the test.

- **Caveat: LPR who leaves +180 days, some PRUCOL, parolees, people granted withholding of deportation, indefinite stay, etc. if apply for family-based petition. Speak to attorney.**

Key Points About Immigran ts' Use of Benefits

The Public Charge Rule changed in December of 2022.

- Before – if a parent's eligible child was receiving cash aid – and it was the family's ONLY source of income – use of that benefit could be a negative factor in the parent's public charge determination.

Now – Only benefits for which the immigrant is the actual beneficiary count, so a child's use of ANY benefits doesn't impact the parent

- Before- the previous administration added use of Medi-Cal, CalFresh and some housing aid to the public charge test.

Now – the rule makes very clear only use of cash aid for income maintenance and long-term care paid for by Medi-Cal count. In almost every circumstance – if you are eligible for cash aid, the public charge test does not apply to you.

All Other Benefits Are Not Considered in a Public Charge Test.

The New Rule Clarifies Many Exclusions:



All Health Care!

- Medicare
- Full-Scope and Restricted-Scope Medi-Cal
- Medi-Cal for Children and Pregnant Women
- My Health LA
- CHIP
- Sliding Scale Health Center Programs
- Covered CA
- IHSS



All Nutrition, School, and Childcare!

- Food Stamps / CalFresh
- WIC
- Head Start
- School Breakfast and Lunch

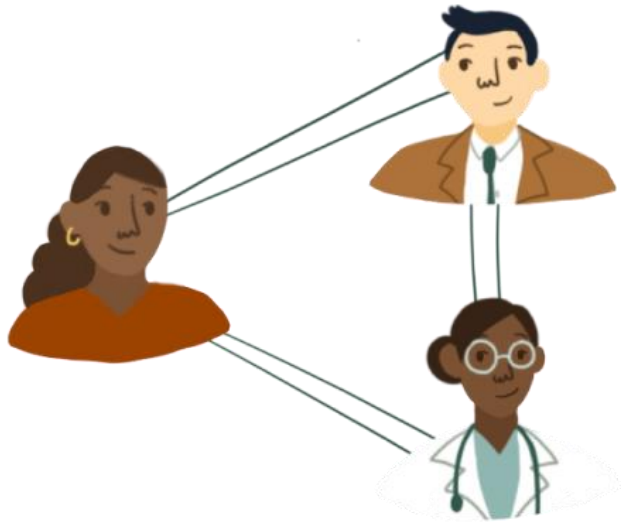
- All school-based services at public schools
- Public school
- Foster care benefits
- Childcare
- Student loans



All Housing, "Earned" Benefits, Special Purpose, and Tax Credits!

- SSA Retirement Benefits
- SSDI
- Veteran's benefits
- All tax credits/stimulus money
- All Pandemic Assistance
- Public Housing , Section 8, LIHTC
- Utility/Internet/Phone Assistance
- FEMA/Disaster Assistance
- EDD Benefits: PFL, Unemployment, SDI
- Workers' Compensation

BAILA Services



Enrollment in Medi-Cal, Covered California, My Health LA, and CalFresh

Referrals for enrollment in other programs like: WIC, CalWORKs, housing assistance, utility assistance, and more!

Legal assistance: public charge questions, sponsor issues, benefits retention problems

Identifying a BAILA Client

Definition

Person is immigrant or has at least one immigrant family member (immigrant is someone who was not born in the US, regardless of status)



AND/OR

Loss of income due to COVID-19

AND

Goal of services is improving access to public benefits.



How to Refer Someone to the BAILA Network

1. Visit <https://www.bailanetwork.org/>
2. Click "Get Help"
3. Fill out the intake form
4. Click "Submit"
5. A BAILA Enroller will contact you!



BAILA
Network

Benefits Access for Immigrants
Los Angeles

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Supporting immigrant families and essential workers to access
the public benefits they need to stay healthy and strong.

[Get Started](#)



Contact Us!

- Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles
- 800-433-6251
- Hotline: Monday to Friday 9-1, closed Wednesdays