

COVID-19 and Public Charge: What Immigrant Communities Need to Know

Updated March 16, 2020

On March 13, USCIS announced that testing, prevention, or treatment for COVID-19, also called Coronavirus, would NOT be used against immigrants in a public charge test. This means that immigrant families should seek the care they need during this difficult time. All of us have a role to play in keeping our communities healthy. This is especially true when our communities face a public health emergency like COVID-19. Immigrant families may be wondering which resources are available to them during this time. Below is some information about immigrants' rights in health care settings:

- **It is safe and smart to see the doctor if you need care.** Your doctor is required to honor your right to privacy. You do not need to share any information about your immigration status unless you apply for Medicaid or other health coverage.
- **You can still see a doctor without medical insurance.** This includes care you receive in the emergency room, at community and migrant health centers, free clinics, and public hospitals. If you don't have a doctor, call a local community health center for assistance. You can find a health center here: <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>
- **Hospitals and health care spaces are safe to visit.** Federal guidelines prohibit immigration agents from conducting arrests or other enforcement actions at health care facilities, such as hospitals, doctors' offices, health clinics, and urgent care facilities.
- **[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about your rights when accessing health services.**

If you feel your rights or the rights of someone you know have been violated, you can file an immigration enforcement civil rights complaint. To learn more about filing a complaint, [click here](#).

ON PUBLIC CHARGE:

On February 24, the Trump administration implemented a new wealth test for people applying for their green card. This wealth test -- also known as the public charge test -- affects only a select group of immigrants. Here are the facts on public charge:

- **Public charge does not apply to all immigrants.** To learn more about who is affected by the rule, visit [Protecting Immigrant Families](#) or [Keep Your Benefits](#) (for California residents).
- **Many health and nutrition programs are NOT included in the public charge test - and are still safe to use.** These include:
 - Emergency Medicaid
 - State and locally funded health care
 - Child care related services
 - Disaster assistance
 - Disaster SNAP (also known as D-SNAP or disaster food stamps)
 - Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
 - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - Food banks and homeless shelters
- **A family member's use of public benefits will not affect an immigrant's green card application.** There is *no* benefit to disenrolling U.S. citizens or other eligible family members from health and nutrition programs.

For more information, visit www.protectingimmigrantfamilies.org and learn more about how to keep our communities healthy and strong.