

Washington Public Assistance for Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence

Should I read this?

This explains what benefits you may be eligible for if you are an immigrant and a victim of domestic violence.

My husband mistreats me and makes me afraid. I do not have legal immigration status. I am afraid to call the police. What can I do?

You may be able to apply for a green card for yourself and your children under the “Violence against Women Act” (VAWA) **if one of these is true:**

- You have been abused by a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (LPR) spouse.
- You have been abused by a US citizen or LPR parent (and you are under age 21).
- Your child has been abused by a U.S. citizen or LPR parent.
- You have been abused by a U.S. citizen or LPR child (who is over age 21).

You may be eligible for other immigration relief even if you are not married or related to the person who abused you, or s/he does not have legal status. If you have questions about this, contact the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project in Western Washington at 800-445-5771, or in Eastern Washington at 888-756-3641 (if you live in Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Walla Walla Whitman & Yakima counties) or 866-271-2084 (if you live in Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry,

Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane & Stevens counties).

Will my family and I be eligible for benefits if we leave my abuser?

Probably, if you have one of these:

- An approved self-petition or notice of prima facie relief under the VAWA.
- An approved I-130 visa petition filed by your abuser.
- An approved application for suspension of deportation OR cancellation of removal under the VAWA.

If you meet other requirements, you and your family members may be eligible for

- **Emergency Medicaid** for treatment of certain emergency conditions in a hospital setting, cancer treatment, and dialysis
- **Insurance through [Healthplanfinder](#)** - the state health insurance exchange, plus subsidies and tax credits to help with out-of-pocket costs
- **Medical Care Services (MCS)** - medical assistance for persons who are disabled or over 65
- **Children’s and pregnant women’s medical** - all low-income children and pregnant women are eligible, regardless of immigration status

- **State Family Assistance (SFA)** - cash assistance for families with dependent children
- **Aged Blind and Disabled (ABD)** - cash assistance for persons who are disabled or over 65
- **Pregnant Women’s Assistance (PWA)** - cash assistance
- The state-funded **Food Assistance Program** (food stamps)
- **Working Connections** subsidized childcare

You may also be eligible for some federal benefits. You must wait five years after the government grants your immigration petition or application:

- **Non-emergency Medicaid** for persons up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** - a federally funded cash program for families with dependent children
- the federally funded **Food Stamp** program

I have a U visa. Am I eligible for any of these programs?

If you have a U visa but have not yet adjusted to lawful permanent resident (“green card”) status, you and your family members may be eligible for

- **Emergency Medicaid** for treatment of certain emergency conditions in a hospital setting, cancer treatment, and dialysis

- **Insurance through [Healthplanfinder](#)** - the state health insurance exchange, plus subsidies and tax credits to help with out-of-pocket costs
- **Medical Care Services (MCS)** - medical assistance for persons who are disabled or over 65
- **Children’s and pregnant women’s medical assistance** - available to all low-income children and pregnant women, regardless of immigration status
- **State Family Assistance (SFA)** - cash assistance
- **Aged Blind and Disabled (ABD)** cash assistance for persons who are disabled or over 65
- **Pregnant Women’s Assistance (PWA)** - cash assistance
- the state-funded **Food Assistance Program** (food stamps)

How do I apply for help?

For cash and food assistance and for some medical programs, you apply at the DSHS office nearest you. For most medical programs, including insurance and subsidies, you can apply through [Healthplanfinder](#) online at www.wahealthplanfinder.org, by phone at 1-855-923-4633 (1-855-WAFINDER), or by requesting a paper application from [Healthplanfinder](#) or your local DSHS office. If you go online, be sure to go to www.wahealthplanfinder.org.

If you apply for benefits in person, take a copy of your immigration papers, if you have them. (This includes a copy of your receipt notice

from USCIS.) If you do not have immigration papers yet, you may still be eligible for some help. If you do not have a social security number, leave that line blank, or put “not available.” DSHS must accept emergency applications at any time. They may be able to help you soon with cash, medical coupons, and food stamps.

What if I do not speak English?

DSHS must give you an interpreter. DSHS must also translate its letters to you. When you fill out an application, check the box that says that you have a hard time speaking, reading, or writing English. DSHS should also get you an interpreter if you have to call your worker on the phone or if she calls you back with a question.

What if I do not read and write, or have a hard time understanding information and following through?

When you apply for help, DSHS will ask if you need extra help, such as someone to help you fill out forms, or call you to explain your letters. If you do, say so. Ask them to provide you Necessary Supplemental Accommodation (NSA). [DSHS Help for People with Disabilities: Necessary Supplemental Accommodations \(NSA\)](#) has more info on the services for someone who needs NSA.

If I get public benefits for my children and myself, will welfare tell my husband where I am?

No. DSHS usually asks for info about the fathers of children who apply for assistance to make sure the fathers pay child support for

their children. This can mean your children get more money than DSHS will provide.

If you are afraid that your child’s father may try to find you and hurt you, tell DSHS it should not collect child support for this reason. If your husband has been violent or threatened violence in the past, ask DSHS to keep your address confidential.

My children and I do not have our green cards (lawful permanent residence) yet. Will getting assistance make it hard for us to get our green cards later?

No. People who get their status through a self-petition or a grant of cancellation or suspension under the VAWA are not subject to the “public charge” ground of inadmissibility. You can get your green card even if you have used public benefits. The same is true for people who have U visas.

[When Is It Safe For Immigrants To Get Benefits? Public Charge Rules and Possible Changes](#) has more info.

My abusive husband petitioned for me. He filled out an affidavit of support saying he will support my children and me. Can DSHS deny me assistance?

No. DSHS should not make you provide information about your sponsor’s income and resources if you are a domestic violence victim and your need for assistance stems from the domestic violence. DSHS may try to recover the assistance from your sponsor. They cannot deny you help because he will not pay.

What if I need help getting public assistance for my children or myself?

If you have questions about your eligibility for public assistance or if DSHS has ended or denied your benefits, get legal advice. Public assistance rules are complicated. DSHS workers sometimes make mistakes because they do not know immigration law. A lawyer or advocate can help make sure you and your family get the benefits you need to stay safe and healthy. You can:

Apply online with [CLEAR*Online](http://nwjustice.org/clear-online) - <http://nwjustice.org/clear-online>

or

Call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014

CLEAR is Washington's toll-free, statewide intake, advice and referral service for low-income people looking for free legal help with civil legal problems.

- **Outside King County:** Call 1-888-201-1014 weekdays, 9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. CLEAR works with a language line to provide free interpreters as needed. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call 1-888-201-1014 using your preferred TTY or Video relay service.

- **King County:** Call 211 for info and referral to a legal services provider weekdays, 8:00 am – 6:00 pm. You can also call (206) 461-3200, or toll-free - 877-211-WASH (9274). 211 works with a language line to provide free interpreters as needed. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call 1-800-833-6384 or 711. You get a free relay operator. They will then connect you with 211. You may also find info on King County legal service providers on 211's website, www.resourcehouse.com/win211/.
- **If you are age 60 or Over:** Call CLEAR*Sr. at 1-888-387-7111, regardless of your income.

If you have a different immigration status, please read one of these:

- [Washington Public Assistance for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants](#)
- [Washington Public Assistance for "Lawfully Present" Residents](#)
- [Washington Public Assistance for Family Visa Beneficiaries](#)
- [Washington Public Assistance for Victims of Trafficking](#)
- [Apple Health for Kids Program](#)

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice. This information is current as of November 2017.

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