



Washington Public Assistance for Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence

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- ❖ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.
 - ❖ You can find all the fact sheets we link to here at WashingtonLawHelp.org.
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Should I read this?

Yes, if you are an immigrant and a victim of domestic violence. We explain what benefits you may be eligible to get.

My husband mistreats me. I am afraid of him. 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 U.S. 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 to get other immigration relief even if you are not married or related to the person who abused you, or your abuser does not have legal status.

If you have questions about this, call the **Northwest Immigrant Rights Project**. They have different numbers depending on where in Washington you live:

- in **Western Washington**, call (800) 445-5771
- in **Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Walla Walla Whitman & Yakima counties**, call (888) 756-3641
- in **Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane & Stevens counties**, call (866) 271-2084

Will my family and I be eligible to get 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 to get

- **Emergency Medicaid** for treatment of some 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 have a disability or are over 65
- **Children’s and pregnant women’s medical**—all low-income children and pregnant women are eligible

❖ **New in 2021:** If you are getting Apple Health postpartum care (coverage for after the end of your pregnancy) on or up to a year after the end of the COVID-19 federal health emergency, you will get that care for one year.

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

You may also be eligible to get some federal benefits. You must wait 5 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?

Maybe. If you have not yet adjusted to lawful permanent resident (“green card”) status, you and your family members may be eligible to get

- **Emergency Medicaid** for treatment of some 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 have a disability or are over 65
- **Children’s and pregnant women’s medical assistance**—available to all low-income children and pregnant women
- **State Family Assistance (SFA)**—cash assistance

- **Aged Blind and Disabled** (ABD) cash assistance for persons who have a disability or are 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](https://www.wahealthplanfinder.org) online at www.wahealthplanfinder.org, by phone at 1-855-923-4633 (1-855-WAFINDER), or by asking for a paper application from [Healthplanfinder](https://www.wahealthplanfinder.org) or your local DSHS office. If you go online, be sure to go to www.wahealthplanfinder.org.

❖ **COVID-19 alert:** During the pandemic, local DSHS offices may be closed. To apply for DSHS benefits, you may need to call the Customer Service Contact Center at (877) 501-2233 or visit [WashingtonConnection.org](https://www.washingtonconnection.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). Read [DSHS Help for People with Disabilities: Necessary Supplemental Accommodations \(NSA\)](#) to learn more.

Will Welfare tell my husband where I am?

No. DSHS usually asks for information 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 otherwise provide.

If you are afraid your child's father may try to find you and hurt you, tell DSHS not to 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 (secret from your husband).

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

This is also true if you have a U visa. You can get your green card even if you have used benefits.

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

No. DSHS should not make you give 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 (get reimbursed

for it) from your sponsor. They cannot turn you down for 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 can help make sure you and your family get the benefits you need to stay safe and healthy.

- **Outside King County**, call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.
- **In King County**, call 2-1-1 weekdays between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** can call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111 (statewide).
- You can also apply online with CLEAR*Online: nwjustice.org/get-legal-help.

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

- [Washington Public Assistance for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants](#)
- [Washington Public Assistance for “Lawfully Present” Residents](#)
- [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.

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