



Will Using Benefits Hurt My Chances of Getting a Green Card or Becoming a U.S. Citizen?

If you do not have a green card yet:

 NO PROBLEM. You will not hurt your chances of getting a green card if you use:


- **HEALTH CARE**, such as State Medical Assistance, Basic Health Plan, Children’s Health Program, WIC, prenatal care or other free or low-cost medical care
- **FOOD PROGRAMS**, such as Food Stamps, Food Assistance Program (FAP), WIC, school meals, and other food assistance
- **NON-CASH PROGRAMS**, like public housing, disaster relief, child care services, job training and transportation vouchers

 MIGHT BE A PROBLEM. You will have a problem getting your green card if **YOU** use:


- **CASH WELFARE**, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), State Family Assistance (SFA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or ABD (Aged Blind and Disabled) cash assistance
- **LONG-TERM CARE** in a nursing home or other facility paid for by State Medical Assistance or other governmental funds

CASH WELFARE for your children or other family members is okay if it is **not** your family’s **only** source of support.


If you are a refugee or asylee:

 NO PROBLEM. You can use ANY benefits, including cash welfare, health care, food programs, and non-cash programs, without hurting your chances of getting a green card.

If you are a victim of abuse (granted VAWA relief) or of a crime (granted U or T visa)):


 NO PROBLEM. You can use ANY benefits, including cash welfare, health care, food programs, and non-cash programs, without hurting your chances of getting a green card.

If you already have a green card:

 NO PROBLEM. You cannot lose your green card if you use or your family uses:


- **HEALTH CARE, FOOD PROGRAMS, and other NON-CASH PROGRAMS**

- **CASH WELFARE**
- **LONG-TERM CARE**


 **MIGHT BE A PROBLEM.** You may have a problem if:

- You **leave the U.S. for more than six months** in a row **AND** you have used cash welfare or long-term care, or
- In extremely rare cases, you use cash welfare or long-term care during your first five years in the U.S., for reasons (such as illness or disability) that existed **BEFORE** you entered the U.S.

If you are applying for U.S. citizenship:

 **NO PROBLEM.** You cannot be denied U.S. citizenship for lawfully receiving benefits, including cash welfare, health care, food programs, and non-cash programs.

If you want to sponsor a relative:

 **NO PROBLEM.** Using benefits, including cash welfare, health care, food programs, and non-cash programs, should not prevent you from sponsoring your relative. You will need to show that you or your co-sponsor earns enough income to support your relative.

For more information, call Coordinated Legal Education Advice & Referral (CLEAR) at 1-888-201-1014

Adapted from "Will Using Benefits Hurt My Chances of Getting a Green Card or Becoming a U.S. Citizen?" developed by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center for the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative.

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