

Immigration & Public Benefits in Wisconsin

The government has talked about changing rules about immigrants and public benefits in the future. If there are new rules, you will have 60 days to decide if you need to end your benefits.

For up to date news on rule changes, go to: www.coveringwi.org/immigration

What are public benefits?

These are government programs for people who have low-incomes. Public benefits help with food, housing, cash or healthcare.

For example:

- **W2** (Wisconsin Works) cash assistance
- **Long-Term Care** - a program for disabled adults. It pays for assisted living, or a nursing home.
- **SSI** (Supplemental Security Income) - benefits and cash assistance for disabled people who have very low incomes. (Includes a monthly WI state payment of \$83.35 for one or \$132.05 for a married couple)

What is a green card?



A green card is a **permanent resident card**.

Do you have a status listed below?

Using any type of public benefits won't hurt **your** chances of getting a green card if you have a status listed below:

- Refugee or asylee
- Special immigrant juvenile
- U or T Visa (visas for victims of crimes)
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) approved self-petition
- Relief under Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA), the Nicaraguan and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) or the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (HRIFA)
- Afghan and Iraqi employees of US armed forces

Are you undocumented?

Undocumented family members don't need to share their immigration status or social security number on applications for:

- Public benefits for family members who are documented (WIC, food, healthcare and more)
- Sliding scale fees (low-cost) at community health centers



Talk to a lawyer before getting benefits if you plan to:

- Sponsor or co-sponsor an immigrant
- Petition for a family member to get a green card

Do I need to talk to a lawyer?

- I or someone in my family will have to use a U.S. consulate outside the U.S. (consular processing) to:

- Apply for a green card
- Sponsor or co-sponsor an immigrant to get their green card
- Apply for entry to the U.S.

YES

NO

- I don't have a green card but get **one or more** of these:

- Medicaid Long-Term Care program, which pays for assisted living or a nursing home
- Cash benefits from W2 (welfare) or SSI cash benefits
- Someone in my household gets W2 (welfare) or SSI cash benefits, and it's the only income for the household

YES

NO

- I have a green card and I plan to travel outside the U.S. for more than 6 months

YES

NO

Answer YES to 1 or more questions

Before you decide, talk to a lawyer to better understand how using benefits may affect you or your family's immigration status.

Depending on your situation, you may still be able to use benefits and not harm your family's chance of getting a green card. A lawyer can give you information to help you decide.

Answer NO to all 3 questions

You can use public benefits without affecting your immigration status.

If the law changes, you will have 60 days to decide to end your benefits.

Do you need free or low-cost legal advice?

Check our website for a list of free and low-cost options for legal advice in Wisconsin:

www.coveringwi.org/immigration

Make sure you talk with someone who has one of these titles:

- A lawyer or attorney
- An accredited representative (sometimes called BIA Accredited Representative)

Don't get legal advice from a notary.

A notary in the U.S. can only witness signatures. Notaries can't give legal advice.



Do you live near Minnesota or Illinois?

Check to see if there is help near you:

www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory



Wisconsin
Collaboration on
**Immigrants and
Public Benefits**