



Aid for Immigrants
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WILL USING BENEFITS HURT MY CHANCES OF GETTING A GREEN CARD OR BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN?

GOOD NEWS! INS SAYS:

If you do not have a green card yet

- ☺ NO PROBLEM. You won't hurt your chances of getting a green card if you use:
- **HEALTH CARE**, such as State Medical Assistance, Limited Casualty Program, 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 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 General Assistance (GA-U, GA-S)
 - CASH WELFARE received by your children or other family members is o.k. **UNLESS** it is your family's **only** source of support.
 - **LONG-TERM CARE** in a nursing home or other facility paid for by State Medical Assistance or other governmental funds

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 already have a green card

- 😊 NO PROBLEM. You cannot lose your green card if you or your family use:
- **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 6 months** continuously **AND** you have used cash welfare or long-term care
 - In extremely rare cases, you use cash welfare or long-term care during your first 5 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 earn enough income to support your relative.

For more information, call:

- Gillian Dutton, Northwest Justice Project, at (206) 464-1519 or toll-free 1-888-201-1012
- Coordinated Legal Education Advice & Referral (CLEAR) at 1-888-201-1014
- Elisabeth Tutsch, Columbia Legal Services, at (509) 575-5593 or 1-800-631-1323
- Becki Smith, Columbia Legal Services, (360) 943-6260 or 1-800-260-6260

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.