

# GOOD CHANGE TO PUBLIC CHARGE: NO NEED TO FEAR ACCESSING FOOD ASSISTANCE

## WHAT IS PUBLIC CHARGE?

Since 1999, “Public Charge” or the “public charge test” has been used by immigration officials to review visa and green card applications to see whether a person was likely to become dependent on public cash assistance or would need the government to otherwise pay for their long-term care.

## WHAT HAPPENED IN 2019?

In 2019, under the previous administration, the public charge test was expanded to include programs such as housing assistance and SNAP, and individuals had to prove that they would not need public benefits in the future. This change to public charge caused many families to fear applying for any help in case they would be identified and deported.

## GOOD CHANGES TO PUBLIC CHARGE – WHAT IS THE RULE NOW?

### SEEKING FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM PANTRIES, SCHOOLS, AND OTHER COMMUNITY NONPROFITS HAS ALWAYS BEEN SAFE!

**Applying for or using SNAP, WIC, or School Meals will no longer impact  
your ability to seek lawful residency or citizenship in the US.**

On March 9, 2021, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) stopped applying the 2019 Public Charge Final Rule to all pending citizenship applications and petitions. President Biden and USCIS have decided that public charge will return to only examining “cash assistance that is intended to pay for ongoing living expenses like SSI or TANF and long-term institutional care paid for by Medicaid or another government program.” Therefore, you and your family can apply for and accept help from programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid or other nutrition and housing assistance without fear.

It also does not apply to refugees, asylees, many survivors of trafficking, domestic violence or other serious crimes and many other “humanitarian” immigrants. It does not impact those with green cards unless they leave the US for over 180 days and seek to re-enter.

**FOR MORE RESOURCES AND TO ASK ABOUT YOUR SPECIFIC SITUATION, GO TO  
<https://www.houstonimigration.org/> or 833-468-4664**

**NEED FOOD?** Call the Houston Food Bank help line at 832-369-9390