Public charge considers if a person applying for a green card could be primarily dependent on the government for support in the future. Immigration officials review all of a person’s circumstances and may consider whether a person has been primarily dependent on two specific types of benefits in the past. If immigration officials determine a person is likely to depend on the government for subsistence in the future, they can deny that person permission to come to the U.S. or deny their green card application.

Public charge does not apply to everyone. People seeking a green card through a family member or who seek to enter the US from abroad may be subject to this test. Many people (see the list below) are exempt.

1. Asylees
2. Refugees
3. U or T visa applicants and holders (human trafficking or victims of crimes)
4. VAWA self-petitioner
5. People seeking or granted SIJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status)

Immigration officials can only consider benefits received by the green card applicant. They cannot consider benefits used by other family or household members, even if the applicant's name is on their family member's application, unless the benefits received are the family's only income. Most people applying for family-based green cards are not eligible for these benefits programs.

1. Monthly cash assistance intended to support a person. This includes Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and state-based cash assistance programs.
2. Long-term institutional care at government expense.

* Visit [https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2019-17142/p-2859](https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2019-17142/p-2859) or scan
**WHAT’S THE TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES?**

Immigration officials must consider an affidavit of support – a contract that a sponsor (usually a family member) signs to accept financial responsibility for a person moving permanently to the U.S. Even if someone has used the programs above, immigration officials will look at the individual’s whole situation when they decide if they’re likely to become a public charge in the future. Past use of public benefits can be outweighed by positive factors. The public charge test also considers:

- Income
- Employment
- Education
- Health
- Family Status
- Affidavit of support

We strongly recommend that immigrants seek trusted legal advice if they have public charge or immigration status concerns; in most cases public benefits use will not negatively impact an immigrant’s legal status. Updated information and resources in more languages are available at [pifcoalition.org](http://pifcoalition.org).

Visit [WWW.KEEPYOURBENEFITS.ORG](http://WWW.KEEPYOURBENEFITS.ORG) to get a free, personalized screening.