



Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Public Assistance for Refugees and Asylees

I am a non-citizen refugee or asylee.

Which public benefits can I receive?

If you are a non-citizen refugee or asylee, you may qualify for the following benefits:

CASH

- Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – only during first 7 years after getting status
- Illinois Aid to the Aged, Blind or Disabled (AABD)
- Illinois Transitional Assistance (TA)
- Refugee Assistance – only during first 8 months after getting status
- Social Security Retirement Benefits

MEDICAL

- Medicaid
- Kidcare

FOOD

- Food Stamps
- Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- School Lunch and Breakfast

EDUCATION

- K-12 Education
- Title IV Federal Student Grants and Loans
- Head Start

WILL ENROLLING IN ANY OF THESE PROGRAMS ENDANGER MY APPLICATION FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCY OR CITIZENSHIP?

- NO! INS announced in May 1999 refugees and asylees may use any public benefit without hurting their chances of being approved for lawful permanent resident (LPR) status.
- Also, receiving public assistance of any kind should not endanger an application for citizenship, as long as you are truthful in filling out your application for public assistance.
- However, Medicaid *for long-term nursing home care* and cash benefits such as Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) *may* endanger:
 - Your application for residency, if you are depending on a family member's benefits to survive; *or*
 - Your immigration status, if you depend on the benefits to survive within your first five years as a lawful permanent resident, *but only in certain circumstances.*
- If you have not committed fraud, the immigration service cannot require that you pay back public assistance in order to become a lawful permanent resident!

For more information, call the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights at (312) 332-7360; fax: (312) 332-7044; email: info@icirr.org