

Overview

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security published the [final rule](#) for “public charge” determinations, which took effect on December 23, 2022. An individual who is heavily dependent on government assistance or “public benefits” is determined to be a “public charge”. The final rule restores previous policies when defining the use of “public benefits”, including the **exclusion of Medi-Cal programs** in that definition, except for long-term institutionalized care. In addition, health coverage and financial assistance through Covered California is also **not** considered a “public benefit”. **Accordingly, obtaining health coverage through Covered California or most Medi-Cal programs does not make someone a “public charge”, and will not affect an individual’s immigration status, their chances of becoming a lawful permanent resident, or their chances of becoming a naturalized citizen.**

The California Health and Human Services Agency posted a [Public Charge Guide](#) as a resource for individuals and families with questions about the Federal Government’s updated policy – this guide is also provided in [22 additional languages](#). Because the rule is complex and may affect families differently based on their unique situation, applicants should consult with a legal professional. For additional information on the public charge rule, please reference the resources below:

- [California Department of Social Services \(includes list of nonprofit organizations qualified to assist individuals regarding public charge\)](#)
- [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#)
- [California Immigration Guide](#)

Please note: When a consumer applies for financial help through Covered California’s online application, they will be checked for eligibility for Medi-Cal and for financial assistance through Covered California.