

CORONAVIRUS:

Benefits Information for People without Immigration Status

Last Updated: May 3, 2022

*****Since New Resources of Relief Periodically Arise or End,
Please Visit the CLS Website at www.columbialegal.org/coronavirus-benefits-information-for-people-without-immigration-status/ for the Most Current Information*****

You don't have a Social Security Number. You don't have health care. You have to take time off work or you are laid off because of the coronavirus. You can't get unemployment benefits. What benefits can you or your family get? Worried that if you or your family get benefits it will keep you from passing the Public Charge test if you apply for a green card? **Here are the facts.**

HEALTH CARE

If you are low-income, the state government will pay:

- a clinic or hospital to test you for the coronavirus, and
- if you need treatment, pay for your treatment.

You have to ask the state for this help. Ask the clinic or hospital to help you apply. The name of the program that can help is Alien Emergency Medical or AEM. You do not have to wait to see if you are eligible for AEM to get tested or treated for the coronavirus. AEM can also pay for other kinds of emergency medical treatment you get in the hospital.

If you are an essential worker, you are very likely to have your medical care for COVID covered by the workers compensation system. See the information about workers' compensation below in the "Employment" section.

Does receiving AEM count against the Public Charge test?

No. Getting AEM help to get tested and treated for the coronavirus and getting other kinds of emergency hospital care will not count for the Public Charge test.

If I am undocumented, can I get the vaccine to protect myself against the coronavirus?

Yes. You can find more information about when you can get your vaccine at www.CovidVaccineWA.org. If you have other questions about the vaccine, you can find more information at www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/VaccineInformation/FrequentlyAskedQuestions.

What is the cost of the vaccine?

You can get the vaccine for free, even if you do not have insurance.

Does getting the vaccine count against the Public Charge test?

No. Getting the vaccine will not count for the public charge test.

What is Charity Care? Every Washington hospital has to provide free care for low-income people who:

- don't have insurance, or
- whose insurance doesn't cover all the hospital bills.

Free or reduced cost care is called Charity Care. Even if you have more money, some hospitals will reduce the cost of medical care for people who are not able to pay for their care.

The hospital will ask you to apply for AEM. You can apply for both AEM and Charity Care at the same time. Ask the hospital to give you a Charity Care application.

You do NOT need a Social Security Number to get AEM or Charity Care. You do NOT need to put a Social Security Number on the application for AEM or Charity Care.

Does getting charity care count against the Public Charge test?

No. Charity Care does not count for the Public Charge test. This is true for all hospital care paid for by Charity Care. And, Charity Care applies to hospital care, not just care for the coronavirus.

If I need medical assistance, where can I go?

You can call your health care provider, if you have one, or your local community health clinic, if you need medical care.

Will going to a community health clinic count against me in the Public Charge test?

No.

EMPLOYMENT

If I am undocumented, do I have any right to take paid time off in connection with the coronavirus?

Yes. All of the benefits listed below are available to you no matter what your immigration status is.

Can I get paid time off if I get sick with the coronavirus or if a family member does and I have to take care of them?

Yes. Washington requires your employer to give you one hour of paid sick leave for every 40 hours you work for that employer. Your employer must tell you on your pay stub how much sick time you have earned. If you or your family member are "seriously" ill (which often happens with COVID), you may also qualify for the state Paid Family and Medical Leave program – see below.

What if I or my family member gets sick but are not diagnosed with the coronavirus?

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You can use the Washington sick time that you have earned for any kind of sickness.

What if my workplace is closed and I can't work from home?

You can use your Washington sick time if your workplace is closed by a government order. If you work *in Seattle*, there is also a local law that allows you to use your sick time if your workplace is closed for any health-related reason (no government order required).

What if my children's school or place of care closes (or is virtual only) or my child's care provider isn't available because of the coronavirus?

If your child's school or place of care has been closed by a public official you can receive the following benefits, *which are not available if your care provider (like your child's grandma) is unavailable*:

- You can use whatever Washington paid sick time you have earned.
- If you work *in Seattle*, you can use your paid sick time to care for *any family member* whose school or place of care is shut down *for any reason*.

How do I take paid sick time?

If you feel sick, just give your employer notice right away and stay home. If you know that you will need time off, for example if you have a scheduled appointment, give your employer as much notice as you can.

Your employer will be required to pay you for the time you are out sick (up to the number of hours you have earned under Washington law). The pay rate will be your regular rate. If your employer doesn't allow you to take time off or doesn't pay you for your sick time, contact the Washington Department of Labor & Industries at [360-902-5316](tel:360-902-5316).

What if I or someone in my family gets really sick with the coronavirus?

The Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave program will provide you with up to 12 weeks paid time off if the illness is "serious." This time off is available if you have worked 820 hours in the same year in Washington. You can combine hours from multiple jobs to reach the required number of hours.

If you are undocumented and want to apply, print a Spanish application from the website <https://paidleave.wa.gov/es/apply-now/> (look for the button about one-third of the way down the page that says "Descargar la solicitud en español"), or applications in 14 other languages are available at the very bottom of the page. If you can't print or you need an application in any other language, call [833-717-2273](tel:833-717-2273) for an application to be mailed to you. **If you do not have a valid social security number, do NOT put a social security number or ITIN on the application.** Once your application has been sent in, someone at the paid leave program will contact you to make sure they have the information they need to calculate your hours worked.

If you have called the number above and cannot get through to someone, or you have a problem getting or submitting an application, call the ombudsperson's office at [844-395-6697](tel:844-395-6697).

Can I get workers' compensation (Industrial Insurance, L&I) if I get the coronavirus at work?

If you are an essential worker who is quarantined because you were exposed to or contracted the coronavirus, you are likely eligible to receive wage replacement and paid treatment for COVID. The Department of Labor and Industries will presume that you got COVID at work and are eligible for benefits unless your employer can show you

got COVID somewhere else. For more information see HELSA Infographic: <http://columbialegal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/HELSA-pub-English-2021.pdf>.

A social security number is NOT required to file an application for workers' compensation. For help with a workers' compensation claim, contact the Department of Labor & Industries at [877-561-3453](tel:877-561-3453) or <https://secure.lni.wa.gov/home/default.aspx?rfs=PleaseSign%20In> or tell your medical provider that you want to make a workers' comp claim.

Will using Washington sick time, Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave, or applying for workers' compensation benefits count against the public charge test?

No. None of these employment benefits will count against you on the Public Charge test.

If I am undocumented, can I apply for unemployment benefits if my employment is closed because of the coronavirus?

No. You need a valid social security number to apply for this benefit.

HOUSING

Can I get help for paying my rent if I am laid off of work?

Under a statewide program that began in August 2020 through the Department of Commerce, you can request up to 3 months of emergency rental assistance if:

- Your income is at or below 50% of the area medium income;
- At least one month of your rent was not paid or is partially unpaid since March 1, 2020, and;
- 50% or more of your monthly income goes to pay rent, you have experienced homelessness within the last 5 years, you have been evicted from your housing, your housing was disrupted, you are at risk of severe illness, or a household member has a disability.

The rental assistance will be paid to the landlord, who must agree to participate in the program. You must apply for the rental assistance through local service providers. The list of local service providers can be found at: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/eviction-rent-assistance-program/>.

Will receiving rent assistance count against the public charge test?

No.

Can I be evicted from my housing if I do not pay rent?

Possibly, but there are ways to get help. If you owe back rent, your landlord must offer you a reasonable repayment plan and an opportunity for mediation through an Eviction Resolution Pilot Program. For more information see: <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/eviction>.

If I live in Benton or Franklin County, can I get assistance for rent and utilities?

Yes. If you are experiencing a financial hardship due to the coronavirus and you are at least one month late on rent or utility payments and meet the program income requirements, you may be eligible to receive financial assistance through the Benton County Department of Human Services Rent and Utility Assistance program. Funds are available through September 30, 2022, or until funding is exhausted.

You can print and fill out the application at https://www.franklinpud.com/assets/uploads/RAP_Household_Information_Eligibility_Application.pdf, attach a copy of your most recent electric bill, and return it to the Benton County Department of Human Services by using their drop box or sending it by fax to 509-783-5981. For questions call 509-737-3946.

If you do not have a Social Security Number, you can provide an ITIN or leave that section blank and attach a self-declaration stating you do not have a Social Security Number.

PUBLIC BENEFITS

Can I get other help from the government if I am undocumented?

If you are low-income, you may be able to get:

- AEM—see information about AEM above,
- Medical care for pregnant women and new mothers,
- Immunizations for communicable diseases,
- Women, Infants, and Children or WIC,
- Breakfast and school lunches for children (check with your local school district),
- Health care for children up to 21 years of age, and
- Beginning April 2021, you may be eligible to get cash from the Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP). You do not need to have kids to qualify for DCAP. For more information on DCAP, see DSHS Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/21-0271%20DCAP%20FAQ%201-pager.pdf>.

If I receive these benefits, will it count against the Public Charge test?

No. Getting any of these benefits doesn't count for the Public Charge test.

Where can I apply for these benefits?

You apply for WIC at local clinics. To find a clinic, call [800-322-2588](tel:800-322-2588). Each person on WIC gets \$50 per month. WIC helps you buy certain foods if you are pregnant and for you and your children up to age 5.

You apply for AEM, DCAP, and medical care for pregnant women, new mothers, and health care for children under 21 by calling [877-501-2233](tel:877-501-2233).

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

Can I get help to pay for the internet service?

Yes. The Affordable Connectivity Program provides a discount of up to \$30 per month towards internet service and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. You can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, a desktop computer, or a tablet from participating providers.

Your household is eligible if a member meets one of the criteria below:

- You are low income;
- You participate in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, or WIC;
- You receive Lifeline (<https://www.fcc.gov/lifeline-consumers>);
- You are approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program; or,
- You received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;

As of December 31, 2021, if you are eligible, you can apply at <https://acpbenefit.org/how-to-apply/>. Applications are available in both English and Spanish. **A Social Security Number is not required to participate in the program.**

Does receiving assistance for the internet service count against the Public Charge test?

No. Receiving this assistance will not count against the Public Charge test.

LEGAL HELP

Where can I get legal help?

- **If you do not live in King County:** You can contact CLEAR, Washington's toll-free advice and referral service for low-income people seeking free legal assistance with civil legal problems by calling [888-201-1014](tel:888-201-1014).
- **If you live in King County:** You can call [211](tel:211) for information and referral to an appropriate legal services provider.