KNOW YOUR BENEFITS:

A Guide for Immigrants



The IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE RIGHTS team protects and defends the rights of immigrants and refugees through advancing pro-immigrant public policies and providing strategic legal representation.

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Refugees and Asylees

If you are a refugee or have *approved* asylum status, Medicaid changes are coming. Here's what you need to know.

- You will lose eligibility for Medicaid on October 1, 2026.
- However, you are eligible for Refugee Medical Assistance coverage for 12 months after you receive asylum or refugee status. You can contact you local DSS office to apply. More information is available here.
- If you were formerly a refugee or asylee and have now received legal permanent residency (green card), you are ***immediately eligible*** for Medicaid with no waiting period after receiving your green card.
- You are eligible for TANF (Work First Cash Assistance) and Supplemental Security Income immediately upon receiving refugee or asylee status, if you meet all other eligibility criteria. After receiving a green card, you are also immediately eligible for SNAP (food stamps).
  - Refugees can apply for a green card after 1 YEAR in the U.S.
  - Asylees can apply for a green card after 1 YEAR in the U.S. ***with approved asylum status.***

IMPORTANT:
Refugees and asylees who are pregnant women and children under 19 will continue to be eligible for Medicaid after October 1, 2026, even if they do not yet have their green cards.

NOTE: Wait times for your green card approval can be long! If you have not yet started the process to obtain your green card, you should speak with a lawyer as soon as possible.

- If you are a refugee or asylee who does NOT yet have a green card, you are eligible for the following programs, as long as you meet all other eligibility criteria:
  - Health coverage from Healthcare.gov (but only through December 31, 2026)
  - Women, Infant, and Children's nutrition program (WIC)
  - School lunch and breakfast
  - Social Security disability and Social Security retirement

TO FIND OTHER HEALTH CARE OPTIONS:

For help finding low or no cost health care / prescription drugs, applying for benefits, finding local food or housing options and more, check out our Health Resources sheet at www.ncjustice.org/health-resources