



Massachusetts “Safe to Use” Benefits
Benefits that will not impact the Public Charge analysis
October 2022

REMEMBER!

The benefits listed below, when received by the immigrant subject to the public charge test will not impact eligibility for a green card or visa. **The ONLY benefits considered as part of the public charge test are:**

- (1) cash assistance for income maintenance; and
- (2) long-term nursing home care at government expense.

This is not an exhaustive list, and we are continuing to add to it - there are other safe benefits! However, all benefits have specific eligibility criteria. Some benefits may not be available to people who don’t meet the eligibility criteria due to immigration status or other reasons.

Benefits received by family members never count! Family members, including spouses and children, who receive cash assistance for income maintenance and long-term nursing home care at government expense will not impact your public charge analysis.

Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
<i>Food & Nutrition</i>	
<u>SNAP/EBT (supplemental nutrition benefits)</u>	Formerly called “food stamps” the SNAP programs gives households money to buy food at grocery stores and farmers markets. Benefits are paid through EBT (electronic benefits transfer) each month to eligible households. The amount is based on countable income and household size.
<u>HIP (Health Incentive Program)</u>	For eligible SNAP households, the HIP program provides an additional monthly EBT subsidy to help households afford fresh fruits and vegetables at Massachusetts farmer markets, farm stands and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs).
<u>WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children)</u>	Similar to SNAP, these are EBT benefits to pregnant and breastfeeding women, and children under age 5. The benefit is limited to certain food items based on nutrition counseling.



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Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
<p>Food pantry & meal delivery programs (information on local sources through Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline)</p>	<p>Food pantries and community feeding programs typically get food from one of the four MA food banks as well as donations from grocers and community members. They distribute free food to members of the community.</p>
<p>P-EBT (Pandemic EBT)</p>	<p>When available, P-EBT are special EBT benefits for children who miss K-12 school or miss attending childcare due to COVID-19, and who qualify for free school meals or pay a reduced-price fee. This includes all children in a school district that provides free school meals as a "Community Eligibility Program" school. P-EBT is also available to children ages 0-5 years who get SNAP benefits and who are impacted by COVID-19.</p>
<p>Free and reduced-cost school meals</p>	<p>Free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch at K-12 schools. Nutritional meals at day care centers, family day care homes, residential child care institutions, and during the summer for eligible children and adults.</p>
<p>Housing</p>	
<p>Boston's Rental Relief Fund and other Massachusetts rental assistance programs and housing vouchers</p>	<p>Boston's Rental Relief Fund are federal funds to help Boston residents at risk of losing their housing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Three largest Massachusetts funds include: The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP), among other programs.</p>
<p>Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)</p>	<p>Assistance with rent and housing costs when facing eviction, loss of utilities, or other housing emergencies.</p>
<p>Massachusetts Public Housing</p>	<p>State-aided public housing includes low-income family, elderly, and handicapped housing in buildings owned by Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) throughout 240 cities and towns in MA. Note that the term "state-aided public housing" does not include state or federal rental payment vouchers or federal public housing programs.</p>



Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
Federal Public Housing	Federal Public Housing eligibility is based on: 1) annual gross income; 2) whether you qualify as elderly, a person with a disability, or as a family; and 3) U.S. citizenship or eligible immigration status.
Emergency Assistance shelter and HomeBASE	Emergency shelter for families fleeing substantial health or safety risks in Massachusetts. HomeBASE provides families who are in the emergency shelter assistance system an opportunity to overcome some of the financial barriers to ending their homelessness.
Homeless shelters in Boston , greater Boston , and throughout Massachusetts	Services for those experiencing homelessness.
Massachusetts Housing Development Programs	Homeownership assistance programs and home mortgage loans
Federal and State Low income Housing Tax Credits	The Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) is a federally authorized program for non-profit and for-profit developers to promote the construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing.
Health	
COVID-19 testing , vaccine and COVID-19 resources for immigrants .	Testing, vaccines, and health resources for COVID-19.
MassHealth programs (except for MassHealth payment for long term nursing home care)	In Massachusetts, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are combined into one program called MassHealth. MassHealth members may be able to get doctors visits, prescription drugs, hospital stays, and many other important services.
Health Safety Net	Health Safety Net (HSN) pays acute care hospitals and community health centers for certain essential health care services provided to qualified uninsured and underinsured Massachusetts residents.



Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
Medicare	Medicare is health insurance for people 65 or older and certain younger people with disabilities.
Medicare Savings Programs (also known as the MassHealth Senior Buy-in or the Buy-In)	If you are a Massachusetts resident on Medicare with limited income and assets, you may qualify for help paying your Medicare costs. MassHealth offers Medicare Savings Programs, also known as MassHealth Buy-In (MHBI) to help with these costs.
Low cost insurance from the Health Connector including ConnectorCare	People with household incomes that are at 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or lower may qualify for ConnectorCare. You may qualify if you live in Massachusetts, are a US Citizen, National, or lawfully present immigrant, do not have access to an employer's affordable, comprehensive health insurance, not be in jail or prison, and not qualify for Medicare, MassHealth (Medicaid) or other public health insurance programs.
Receiving care at a community health center or emergency room	There are 52 health center organizations in Massachusetts that provide care through 300 sites.
The Children's Medical Security Program (CMSP)	The Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP) provides coverage for primary and preventive medical and dental services to certain uninsured children, under 19 years old, who do not qualify for any other MassHealth types of coverage (other than MassHealth Limited).
Prescription Advantage or other programs of the Exec Office of Elder Affairs	Prescription Advantage provides prescription drug coverage for Massachusetts residents age 65 and older, as well as younger people with disabilities who meet income and employment guidelines.
Flu vaccine and other immunizations or programs funded by Massachusetts or local health departments	To learn more about the flu, visit flu information for general public website or www.cdc.gov/flu .



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Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
<i>Financial assistance</i>	
Donations from individuals, faith organizations, or nonprofit organizations	The United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley has established a COVID-19 Family Support Fund to provide assistance to individuals and families with basic needs, including food and rent. Some communities are also creating local funds by raising money with the United Way. Call 2-1-1 for information on how to apply for assistance from funds that are coordinated with the United Way.
Covid-19 Economic Relief	The American Rescue Plan provides \$350 billion in emergency funding for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and bring back jobs.
Tax stimulus	Stimulus checks are payments sent by the government to taxpayers to boost their spending power and spur economic activity. Stimulus checks are either mailed to taxpayers, deposited into their bank accounts, or applied as tax credits to lower their tax bills.
Federal and State Tax credits (including CTC, EITC, ACTC)	An amount of money that can be offset against a tax liability.
Unemployment assistance	Temporary income assistance to eligible workers in Massachusetts.
Small Business Administration loans & grants	The U.S. Small Business Administration helps small businesses get funding by setting guidelines for loans and reducing lender risk. These SBA-backed loans make it easier for small businesses to get the funding they need.
Refugee Cash Assistance	Monthly grant to eligible participants of the Massachusetts Refugee Resettlement Program (MRRP) for up to 12 months.
Worker's compensation	Information regarding Massachusetts worker's rights and safety including wages and working salaries, worker's compensation, workplace injuries and illnesses.



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Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
Federal and State Student Loans and Grants	<p>These programs provide grant, work-study, and loan funds to students attending college or career school.</p> <p>The Massachusetts No Interest Loan (NIL) program was created to provide needy Massachusetts residents attending post-secondary educational institutions in Massachusetts with a state-funded loan.</p>
Energy assistance, including Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)	<p>The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assists eligible low-income households with their heating and cooling energy costs, bill payment assistance, energy crisis assistance, weatherization and energy-related home repairs.</p>
Non-cash Massachusetts Veteran Benefits	<p>Eligible veterans and family members may get peer support from the Statewide Advocacy for Veteran Empowerment (SAVE) team, connection to the Women Veterans' Network (WVN), or opportunity for burial at the Massachusetts Veteran Memorial Cemeteries in Agawam and Winchendon.</p>
<p>Earned Benefits - These are cash benefits based on your past earnings record (how long you worked and how much you earned). They are not considered "cash assistance for income maintenance" and therefore they are not considered "cash assistance for income maintenance" and do not impact the public charge analysis.</p>	
Social Security retirement , and survivors & disability benefits	<p>Social Security is monthly income based on an individual's earnings record and the amount of FICA paid. Social Security is provided to individuals who retire (including early retirement, but paid at a lower rate); individuals who are disabled, and the dependents or survivors of Social Security beneficiaries. It is available to both US citizens and legally present immigrants who have contributed into the Social Security system.</p>
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	<p>Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is for workers (and their children or surviving spouses) who have Social Security coverage.</p>



Name of Benefits Program	Brief description
Unemployment assistance	Temporary income assistance to eligible workers in Massachusetts.
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	The Massachusetts EITC is available to certain individuals or families who have low or moderate earned income.
Other Benefits	
Transportation Access Pass and reduced fares	People with disabilities and Medicare card holders are eligible for reduced MBTA fares with a Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard.
Foster care and adoption services	Foster care and adoptive services operated by the Massachusetts Department of Children & Families.
Subsidized Early Education and Care	The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) provides financial assistance for families in need in the form of vouchers and contract slots that pay providers for some or all of the cost of child care.
Head Start	Head Start is a federal program that offers early education and care programs and services for low-income families.
Public education (K-12)	Massachusetts state law guarantees free public K-12 education to all children and young adults ages 5 to 22 through their local school districts.
Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)	The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a U.S. government program run by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to help low-income households pay for internet service and connected devices like a laptop or tablet.

THERE ARE MORE SAFE BENEFITS NOT ON THIS LIST!

If there are other benefits not listed that you're wondering about, please fill out this [form](#) or email cramirezmejia@miracoalition.org to let us know.