

Community Benefits: Post-Election Frequently Asked Questions

This information is current and accurate as of March 17, 2017

1. Have the public benefit assistance programs offered by the Department of Social Services (DSS) changed in any way since the Presidential election?

No. We know there is increased uncertainty and anxiety about Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs and other public assistance programs in light of statements made in Presidential executive orders, the news and elsewhere. However, no changes have been made to any of the public benefit programs administered by DSS.

If you are eligible to receive Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKS, cash assistance, subsidized childcare or In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) now, you are **still** eligible to receive those benefits.

2. I'm concerned about the privacy of my information. How is the information provided about myself or my family used by the Department of Social Services?

DSS uses the information you give us only to see if you are eligible for benefits. We may need to verify the information you provide on a public benefit application with the federal government, but only to confirm your eligibility to receive services. We do not share any information about household members who are not applying for benefits. The federal government does not access our systems for immigration enforcement action.

3. The President has released executive orders on immigration and immigration enforcement. Do these announcements change immigrants' and legal residents' ability to participate in public benefits like Medi-Cal, CalFresh and CalWORKs?

If you or your family is now eligible for public benefits or services, you are still eligible. There are currently no changes to California's public assistance eligibility requirements, your health care coverage, or how we use your personal information. This includes all eligibility rules affecting immigrants.

Despite what you may have heard or read, the federal government has not changed how "public charge" rules apply to anyone. Public charge is a term used in immigration law to describe someone who is likely to rely on government benefits to get by. Currently, use of CalFresh or Medi-Cal does not impact immigration status and will not cause anyone to be considered a public charge by immigration officials. However, under current policy, receiving cash assistance through CalWORKs and institutional long-term care paid for by Medi-Cal may cause you to be considered a public charge.

We continue to process all applications and renewals and provide benefits to you just as we did before.

4. Will discontinuing my benefits remove my information from California's systems?

No. State and local computer systems keep a record of your old case, so we will continue to have your information on file. Choosing to stop your benefits will result in loss of critical health care coverage, cash and food assistance. Our hope is to help you continue to receive the assistance you and your family are eligible to receive today.

5. What kind of changes is the Department of Social Services preparing for?

Much of the information covered in recent news reports are about changes that *may* happen in the future. However, big changes to public programs like Medi-Cal, CalFresh and CalWORKs do not happen overnight; they often require approval by Congress that takes time to go into effect.

The important thing to know is that we are closely tracking actions at the federal level, and you will be informed *if* there are any changes that affect you or your family's eligibility to receive benefits.

6. I still have questions about how participating in public benefit programs could impact my immigration status or citizenship. Can the Department of Social Services provide me with assistance?

DSS cannot provide legal guidance specific to you and your family. We encourage you to seek advice from a reputable nonprofit immigration service provider. We can provide you with a list of referral agencies.