

COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR IMMIGRANT CALIFORNIANS



EN
ENGLISH

ALSO AVAILABLE IN:

Español
中文
Filipino
Tiếng Việt
한국어
عربي



California
Immigrant Guide

CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT
GUIDE:

ImmigrantGuide.ca.gov



LISTOS CALIFORNIA:

ListosCalifornia.org

This guide provides tips about services, including public benefits, that are available to immigrant Californians, including some that are available regardless of immigration status. Check COVID19.CA.GOV for updates.

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STAY HOME ORDER | ORDEN DE QUEDARSE EN CASA

Governor Newsom has required Californians to stay at home to reduce the spread of COVID19 and help save lives. The state is working to protect the health and safety of all Californians, regardless of their immigration status. We are all in this together. You can save your life, and help save others, by taking these steps.

YOU MUST STAY HOME EXCEPT TO

Get food or medicine.

Get needed healthcare.

Care for a relative, friend or pet.

Exercise, while maintaining physical distance of 6 feet from others.

Go to an essential job, which may include:

- Health care
- Food stores & farmers markets
- Caregiving
- Takeout & delivery restaurants
- Gas stations
- Banks
- Law enforcement
- Trash removal
- Necessary government jobs

Check out the full [LIST OF ESSENTIAL JOBS](#) and frequently asked questions. Or see the full list of [ESSENTIAL JOBS IN ESPAÑOL](#).

PROTECT YOURSELF & OTHERS:

TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Stay 6 feet away from others not in your household when you must go out.

Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds, with warm water if available.

Cough or sneeze into a sleeve or tissue. Wash your hands afterwards.

Clean any surfaces you touch often.

Protect older adults and those with health problems, as they face a higher risk of getting sick. Please take extra care if you are over 65 or have a chronic health issue.

Call your health care provider or usual place of health care, like a [LOCAL CLINIC](#), or [PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT](#), if you get a fever, cough or shortness of breath.

Please seek immediate care if you have problems breathing, like shortness of breath.

Follow the advice of public health officials:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [CDC.GOV](#).
- California Department of Public Health at [CDPH.CA.GOV/COVID19](#).
- Your local health department. [FIND YOUR COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT](#).

FIND HELPFUL INFORMATION HERE

GO TO COVID19.CA.GOV

- Learn COVID-19 symptoms and risks
- Get testing and treatment
- Apply for unemployment benefits
- Apply for disability benefits
- Apply for paid family leave
- Get help for small businesses
- Understand the stay-at-home order
- Get help for renters and homeowners
- Get local information from your county about what help is available and what is closed to the public currently.

GO TO 211CA.ORG

Choose “About 2-1-1” to see if your county has 211 services.

If yes, search for that local website.

Select your language preference on your local website.

Look for information and links for help with:

- Food assistance
- Healthcare
- Income and employment issues
- Housing
- Utilities and other bills
- Childcare
- Public benefits
- Transportation
- Mental health
- Scams and price-gouging
- Other community resources

DIAL 211 FROM YOUR PHONE

Operators speak 200 languages.

They may advise you on any of the topics above.

IMMIGRATION HELP

Please review this list of [IMMIGRATION SERVICES FROM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS](#), which provide different immigration services, including free and low-cost immigration legal services across California.

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC CHARGE

Some immigrants worry that the public charge rule stops them from receiving government benefits or that using those benefits will hurt their ability to get a green card.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- NOT all immigrants are subject to a public charge determination.
- Public benefits accepted by family members are generally NOT considered under the public charge rule.
- The new rule does NOT change eligibility rules for public benefits programs.
- Only some benefits are considered public benefits for purposes of public charge.

The **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT** has said that using health care services for COVID-19 prevention, testing or treatment alone does not make you a public charge.

Medi-Cal care for COVID-19 related testing or treatment does NOT count under the public charge rule because it is the treatment of an emergency medical condition.

Please don't let fear stop you from getting necessary treatment, as the effects of avoiding health care services may be very serious. This will help keep you, your family, and your community healthy.

PUBLIC BENEFITS NOT CONSIDERED FOR PUBLIC CHARGE

- Medi-Cal benefits received for the treatment of an emergency medical condition.
- School-based services or benefits.
- Medi-Cal benefits received by a noncitizen under 21 years of age.
- Medi-Cal benefits received by a woman during pregnancy and during the 60-day period beginning on the last day of the pregnancy.
- Public health assistance for immunizations with respect to immunizable diseases, and for testing and treatment of symptoms of communicable diseases whether or not such symptoms are caused by a communicable disease; and many more.

CLICK ON YOUR LANGUAGE FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE PUBLIC CHARGE RULE

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SPANISH
AMHARIC	HAITIAN	TAGALOG
ARABIC	HINDI	VIETNAMESE
BURMESE	HMONG	
CHINESE	KOREAN	

Do you want to talk to an attorney about public charge and your case? Find support on this list of [IMMIGRATION SERVICES FROM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS](#).

HEALTH CARE

Information about benefits can change. Please visit the links available below for the latest information and application details.

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK

- If you have symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, and believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, please CALL your health care provider before seeking care.
- If you don't have health care coverage, please call your usual source of care, like your doctor, [LOCAL CLINIC](#) or [PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT](#).
- It is important to call before seeking care to avoid putting others at risk. Please be sure to tell your health care provider about your travel history.

If you have trouble breathing seek care IMMEDIATELY. If you need to call 911, tell the 911 operator you're experiencing a fever or cough so the ambulance provider can prepare to treat you safely.

TREATMENT AND CARE

- If it is determined you need a COVID-19 test, your test will be free.
- Even if you are undocumented and/or don't have insurance, you can get necessary testing and treatment for COVID-19 through Medi-Cal emergency services, even at a local clinic.
- Emergency services are free for enrolled Medi-Cal beneficiaries which includes COVID-19 testing, evaluation and treatment services.
- Medi-Cal care for COVID-19 related testing or treatment DOES NOT count under the public charge rule because it is the treatment of an emergency medical condition.
- The California community-based [COVID-19 TESTING PROGRAM](#) has expanded access to COVID-19 screening and testing for high-risk people in certain areas of the state. If you are in Santa Clara or San Mateo County, or within 50 miles of the city of Riverside, or the city of Sacramento and want to get tested for COVID-19, you can [COMPLETE THE SCREENER](#) to see if you qualify. You will need internet access and a Google account.
- There is no treatment for COVID-19 currently. However, the CDC lists [10 THINGS YOU CAN DO IF YOU'RE SICK](#) and taking care of yourself at home. Their guidance is also available in [SPANISH](#), [VIETNAMESE](#), [KOREAN](#) and [CHINESE](#).

JOBS, WAGES & BENEFITS

Information about benefits can change. Please visit the links below for the latest information and application details.

IF YOU LOST HOURS OR YOUR JOB DUE TO COVID-19

You can apply for unemployment (UI) benefits for:

- Lost jobs
- Reduced hours
- Missed work for childcare due to school closures

To collect UI benefits, you must have been authorized to work in the United States when earning the wages you used to establish your claim. You must also show that you are authorized to work each week that you claim benefits.

- People who recently started working may nevertheless qualify for UI benefits if they have met the income requirements.
- Those who may have work authorization include DACA recipients, TPS recipients, refugees, or asylums.
- Undocumented workers are not eligible to receive unemployment insurance because they lack work authorization.

Undocumented immigrants may be eligible for State Disability Insurance (SDI) and Paid Family Leave.

If you become sick and can't work, you may get disability benefits.

If you care for a sick family member, you may get paid family leave.

- If your job has paid sick leave, you can use it to care for someone else.
- If not, you can apply for state Paid Family Leave.

Find more information and links to apply for these **[JOB AND LEAVE BENEFITS.](#)**

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from the Employment Development Department (EDD). They have **[EDD COVID-19 FAQs](#)** or **[ESPAÑOL EDD COVID-19 FAQs.](#)**
- Information about **[EDD UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE](#)** or **[EDD UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ESPAÑOL.](#)**

Note: If you are temporarily out of work and plan to return to the same employer, you do not need to meet the usual requirement of looking for work while you are receiving unemployment benefits. The EDD will inform you if you are not required to look for work each week.

Legal Aid at Work also has some FAQs about Coronavirus, which you can view at **[WORK-RELATED FAQs ABOUT COVID-19.](#)** On their website you can also read this information in Spanish and Chinese.

THE BELOW JOB-RELATED BENEFITS DO NOT MAKE YOU A PUBLIC CHARGE

- Unemployment Benefits
- Paid Sick Leave
- Workers' Compensation
- Disability Insurance
- Paid Family Leave

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

If you are a small business owner who is a non-U.S. citizen and holds a temporary visa, or if you are an undocumented immigrant, your eligibility for small business financial assistance will depend on the program. Most importantly, we encourage you to work within your community network of business contacts to find a business consultant or lender that you can trust to understand your situation and carefully walk you through the options that are best for you. Please find a list of resources here.

SMALL BUSINESS CENTERS

For all businesses, California supports a network of small business centers which provide free or low-cost consulting and training to help businesses figure out which loans or other federal, state or local programs are a fit for them, and develop resiliency strategies. Many offer multiple languages. Use this [SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTERS MAP](#) to find the center nearest you.

U.S. SBA

For non-U.S. citizens who have documentation of their legal status, federal resources may be available at the [U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION](#):

- Contact your local lender to inquire about the Paycheck Protection Program and your eligibility. [FIND AN ELIGIBLE PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM LENDER](#).
- To confirm eligibility for Economic Injury Disaster Loans, please contact the SBA, which has a 24-hour customer service line: 1-800-659-2955. For TTY, dial 1-800-877-8339, or email: DISASTERCUSTOMERSERVICE@SBA.GOV.

CALIFORNIA IBANK

The state of California has allocated \$50 million to the Small Business Finance Center at California's IBank to support financial relief. This program is available to all California small businesses including undocumented immigrant entrepreneurs.

- This fund will mitigate barriers to capital for small businesses and nonprofits that may not qualify for federal funds (businesses in low-wealth and immigrant communities).
- Disaster Relief Loan Guarantee Program: Loans of up to \$50,000 will be available through the Financial Development Corporations (FDCs) and their partner CDFI nonprofit lenders. Learn more at the [IBANK SMALL BUSINESS FINANCE CENTER](#).
- To access the program, visit above link to find a local FDC or email IBank at: COVID19LOAN@IBANK.CA.GOV

FOOD & BILLS

Information about benefits can change. Please visit the links available below for the latest information and application details.

IF YOU NEED HELP GETTING FOOD AND PAYING BILLS

FIND A FOOD BANK NEAR YOU. Visit a food bank without having to show identification or share immigration status.

All children can get free meals during school closures. Benefits through the school lunch program DO NOT count under the public charge rule.

- Check with your school district or get the app CA Meals for Kids.

Certain immigrants may apply for food help at [GETCALFRESH.ORG](https://getcalfresh.org).

- Others can apply for a family member who is eligible, including US citizen children. Public charge does not apply to food benefits received by other members of your family, including your children.

The Women Children & Infants (WIC) Program provides nutritious foods, information on healthy eating, and contact information for health care. WIC benefits DO NOT count under the public charge rule. Regardless of your immigration status, you may apply if you are:

- A pregnant woman
- A woman breastfeeding a baby under 1 year of age
- A woman who had a baby or was pregnant in the past 6 months
- A baby under the age of 1
- A child under the age of 5

DIFFERENT KINDS OF CASH ASSISTANCE ARE AVAILABLE TO SOME IMMIGRANTS

- CalWORKs provides cash aid and services to eligible families who have a child(ren) in the home. CalWORKs is available to U.S. citizens and certain immigrants, including US citizen children even if the parent(s) is not eligible, because of immigration status.

Go to the [E-BENEFITS CALIFORNIA WEBSITE](#) to apply online, or contact your [COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY](#).

- General Assistance/General Relief programs are run by each county and provide cash benefits to people who are not eligible for other cash benefits. Each county has their own rules for who can get the benefits, so contact your [COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY](#) to see if you are eligible.
- Refugees, Asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, Amerasians, and Certified Victims of human trafficking may be eligible to receive Refugee Cash Assistance if they are not eligible for other forms of cash assistance. Apply online from the [E-BENEFITS CALIFORNIA WEBSITE](#) or contact your [COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY](#).
- Trafficking and Crime Victim Assistance Program (TCVAP) is a cash assistance program for immigrants who are victims of human trafficking, domestic violence, and other serious crimes. Apply online from the [E- BENEFITS CALIFORNIA WEBSITE](#).
 - To apply in person or to find out more about TCVAP benefits in your county, please call your local [COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY](#).
- U.S. Citizens and certain immigrants who cannot work because of a disability may be eligible for [SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME \(SSI\) BENEFITS](#) or Disability benefits through the Social Security Administration. Also available in [ESPAÑOL](#).
- Certain immigrants, who are not eligible for Supplemental Security Income, and who are elderly, blind, and disabled may apply for the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) by contacting your [COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY](#).

Some animal shelters offer free pet food for drive-through pick up.

Emergency funds in some counties offer cash to buy food and pay bills.

Check social media, including the Next Door app, for offers of help from neighbors and volunteers.

Check with gas, electric and water utilities if you can't pay.

- Many utilities promise not to turn off service for 60 days.
- Certain immigrants may be able to receive **HELP WITH PAYING THEIR UTILITIES.**

Check with your cable/internet provider if you can't pay.

- Many companies will not cut off service during COVID-19 crisis.

The deadline for filing and paying 2019 state and federal taxes is now July 15, 2020.

HOUSING

Information about benefits can change. Please visit the links available below to see the latest information including application details.

IF YOU OWN YOUR HOME AND CANNOT PAY YOUR MORTGAGE

Contact your lender immediately, as many banks (e.g. Wells Fargo, Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, and US Bank) and California credit unions have [**COMMITTED TO DEFER MORTGAGE PAYMENTS**](#) for workers and families who have lost income and/or who need to care for children at home due to the coronavirus.

IF YOU RENT YOUR HOME AND CANNOT PAY RENT

The State of California is protecting renters. [**EXECUTIVE ORDER N-37-20 PROHIBITS SOME EVICTIONS**](#), if the reason is nonpayment of rent because you have lost income for some reason related to COVID-19 (including having your hours reduced, or needing to miss work to care for children at home due to school closures).

- Under the Executive Order, you are still required to eventually make up rental payments you miss, but you will not be evicted for nonpayment of rent until at least June.
- In order to qualify for the eviction protections, you MUST notify your landlord in writing within 7 days of your nonpayment that you cannot pay all or part of your rent due to COVID-19. For example, if your rent is due April 1st, then by April 8th.

There may be additional protections in place in your county or city of residence. Please be sure to check with your local government to determine additional protections against eviction and rent payment relief.

Contact your local housing authority or [**CONTINUUM OF CARE CONTACTS**](#) to see if you are eligible for help to pay for your rent.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR HOUSING

Dial 211 to find housing opportunities in your city or county, or learn more on the U.S. Department of Housing [**COVID-19 HOUSING RESOURCES AND FACTS**](#) page.

If you are currently homeless, find your local homeless [**CONTINUUM OF CARE CONTACTS**](#) or read the article: [**HOW TO GET HELP IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**](#).

REMEMBER YOUR RIGHTS

A landlord cannot discriminate against you because of your race, citizenship status, or national origin.

Landlords cannot refuse to rent to you, or otherwise discriminate against you, because of your source of income, including if you hold a housing subsidy that helps you afford rent. This includes Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, as well as locally funded subsidy programs created by cities, counties, and public agencies to address the COVID-19 crisis.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Find [**LOW INCOME HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**](#).

Local legal services offices that may be able to help if you have been threatened with eviction:

- List of organizations that offer [**FREE LEGAL HELP FOR LOW-INCOME CALIFORNIANS**](#).
- [**LEGAL HELP FOR HOUSING ISSUES**](#).

If you have been a victim of discrimination or harassment in your housing, [**FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING**](#).

CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU

Read this article for tips to [PROTECT YOURSELF FROM FINANCIAL TROUBLE DUE TO COVID-19.](#)

COMMUNITY SAFETY

IF YOU SEE PEOPLE IN PUBLIC WEARING UNIFORMS

You may see soldiers in uniform giving out food or in the streets. These are National Guard, not immigration agents, and are here to help us. They do not do immigration enforcement.

You may also see workers from AmeriCorps, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and other volunteer service groups. These are not immigration agents. They are here to help us.

Governor Newsom's stay-at-home order is carried out by everyday Californians making the choice to save lives by staying home except for essential needs or to go to work as an essential worker.

Some local governments may have stay-at-home orders that are stricter than California's order. You can call 211 or check with your county to get more information about local orders.

- Local police and sheriffs may check to make sure Californians are following these local orders.
- They may ask for personal identification but are not supposed to ask you about your immigration status.

If you need immigration help, please review this list of [IMMIGRATION SERVICES FROM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS](#). They provide different immigration services, including free and low cost immigration legal services across California.

The DMV is working to ensure Californians can continue accessing essential DMV services while also protecting the health of its customers and employees. For the latest information about DMV operations please visit the [DMV WEBSITE](#).

PROTECTING AGAINST SCAMS & BAD INFORMATION

During this time, you may read or hear things that might not be true. Here are a few tips for getting to the truth.

Depend on trusted sources like public health officials and California's elected leaders, including information available at [COVID19.CA.GOV](https://www.covid19.ca.gov)

BAD INFORMATION

False news travels faster than truth: don't spread rumors.

- Even if you hear something from family or friends, it might be wrong.
- Check all sources. Don't share news unless you are sure it is true.

Websites with accurate information include:

- [CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH](https://www.cdph.ca)
- California Coronavirus Response website and toolkit at [COVID19.CA.GOV](https://www.covid19.ca.gov) and [TOOLKIT.COVID19.CA.GOV](https://www.toolkit.covid19.ca.gov)
- Your local health department. [FIND YOUR COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT.](#)

Don't buy things that promise a magic cure, test or protection from the virus.

- For more information and to report scams, go to the [CONSUMER INFORMATION ON CORONAVIRUS SCAMS](#) webpage.

No one is to blame for the COVID-19 outbreak, and we must all work together to end the pandemic. This is also a good time for a few good neighbor reminders:

- Speak up when you see others being treated poorly.
- Many of us will be affected by COVID-19, regardless of our race, ethnicity, gender, age or sexual orientation.
- Be kind to your fellow Californians and Americans and treat everyone with respect.
- Read [GOVERNOR NEWSOM'S TWITTER STATEMENTS AGAINST XENOPHOBIA](#) targeting the Asian American community.