



Common Questions for Immigrant Families About Public Health Insurance Programs

Children's Defense Fund

New York State offers four programs that provide free or low cost health insurance to children and adults: 1) Child Health Plus A (Children's Medicaid), 2) Child Health Plus B, 3) Medicaid and 4) Family Health Plus. Child Health Plus A and Medicaid are free, comprehensive health insurance programs for low-income children and adults. Child Health Plus B and Family Health Plus offer free or low cost health insurance, with services provided through health plans. Child Health Plus B is for children under age 19 who do not qualify for Child Health Plus A, and Family Health Plus is for adults who are between the age of 19 and 64 whose income is too high to qualify for Medicaid. There are no immigration requirements for Child Health Plus B. Children and adults who apply must live and intend to stay in New York to qualify for any of the four public health insurance programs.

Immigrant families often have questions about these health care programs. This fact sheet answers some common questions about Child Health Plus A, Child Health Plus B, Medicaid and Family Health Plus.

*Note: The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) is commonly known and referred to by its former name, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

1. Who can get Child Health Plus A, Child Health Plus B, Medicaid and Family Health Plus (New York's public health insurance programs)?

All children living in New York State regardless of their immigration status should qualify for either Child Health Plus A or B. Those remaining immigrant children who are not eligible for Child Health Plus A either because their family's income is too high, or because they are undocumented, can still receive Child Health Plus B. Many immigrant children can now qualify for Child Health Plus A (Children's Medicaid) and immigrant adults can qualify for either Medicaid or Family Health Plus, even if they have only lived in this country a short time, and even if they don't have a "green card." This includes immigrants who have been in this country for less than five years, and persons who are "PRUCOL" (Permanently Residing Under Color of Law; this basically means the USCIS (formerly the INS) knows they are here and does not intend to deport them).

2. Will use of public health insurance programs hurt my ability to get a green card?

No. The USCIS (formerly the INS) cannot refuse to give you a green card because you or anyone in your family currently use or used these programs in the past. The USCIS could refuse to give a green card to certain immigrants where these programs were used for long term institutional care, such as at a nursing home or mental health institution, or to some immigrants who are HIV positive. Immigrants needing long term care or who are HIV positive should talk to an immigration expert.

3. Will use of public health insurance programs affect my ability to apply for U.S. citizenship?

No. The USCIS (formerly the INS) cannot consider use of these programs when deciding whether to grant an immigrant U.S. citizenship.

4. Will use of public health insurance programs get me deported?

No. The USCIS (formerly the INS) cannot deport you for using these programs. In VERY RARE instances only, the USCIS could seek to deport certain immigrants who use these programs for long term institutional care such as at a nursing home or mental health institutions.

5. **Will use of public health insurance programs prevent me from sponsoring a family member to live in the United States?**

No. Use of these programs cannot be considered when you apply to sponsor a family member to live in the United States. However, you could be asked about how much income you have as a sponsor. Sometimes if your income is low enough to qualify for one of the public health insurance programs, you may need a co-sponsor in order to sponsor a family member.

6. **Will use of public health insurance programs limit my ability to travel in and out of the country?**

No. The USCIS (formerly the INS) cannot refuse to let you re-enter the United States because you are receiving or have received these programs. However, if you have used these program to pay for long term institutional care and you leave the country for more than six months, it could affect your ability to come back to the United States.

7. **Will I have to pay the money back if I use public health insurance programs?**

No. You will not be required to pay back the money used for these programs. If you entered the country after December 19, 1997 and if a sponsor signed an affidavit of support for you, it is possible that the sponsor may have to repay the value of services used. This would be called "sponsor liability", but New York State does not currently impose "sponsor liability" in these programs.

8. **Will I have to reveal my immigration status if I want to apply for health insurance for my child or myself?**

The immigration status of parents is not considered when determining whether a child can get benefits for either Child Health Plus A or Child Health Plus B. You do not have to give a social security number for yourself in order to apply only for your child. However, if you are applying for yourself, you will have to prove your immigration status, to qualify for Medicaid or Family Health Plus.

9. **Will I have to reveal my child's immigration status to apply for Child Health Plus A or Child Health Plus B?**

Health Insurance is available for all children in New York State, regardless of immigration status. You will have to show documents about your child's immigration status if he or she is in one of the categories listed on the application. If your child does not belong to one of the immigration categories listed on the application, you **will not be asked** for any more information or documents about your child's immigration status. If your child is undocumented, you will not have to show any immigration documents, and your child may qualify for Child Health Plus B.

It is New York State's policy NOT to report information on the application to the USCIS (formerly the INS).

10. **What if I need long term institutional care, like care in a nursing home or in a mental health institution?**

Use of Child Health Plus A or adult Medicaid for long term institutional care could be used as a reason by the USCIS (formerly the INS) to deny a green card, as explained above. Discuss your case with an immigration lawyer and your health care provider for details about the risks and benefits for your family.

*For more information about public health insurance programs,
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