

Key Points for Assisters to Help Clients Understand COVID-19 and Public Charge

This handout is for people working directly with clients to help explain how public charge determinations will be made in light of COVID-19 and recent announcements from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Background information on public charge is available here: <https://ckf.cchn.org/wp-content/uploads/Job-Aid-Key-Points-for-Assisters-to-Help-Clients-Understand-the-Final-Public-Charge-Regulation-09.2019-.pdf>

This document is not intended to provide legal advice.

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Testing and Treatment for COVID-19



Testing and treatment for COVID-19 will **not** be considered in a public charge determination. This means that receiving preventive services for COVID-19 will not negatively impact immigrants under public charge.

Uninsured Colorado residents with lawful presence can apply for coverage for COVID-19 testing through Health First Colorado, online at PEAK or in a paper application.

Clients should not refrain from seeking medical care for COVID-19 due to public charge concerns.

Remind clients that:

- The public charge test does not apply to many immigrants, including persons with Lawful Permanent Residency (“Green Card” holders), refugees, and asylees.
- Community Health Centers and other safety-net clinics can offer care on a sliding-fee-scale for people who do not have health insurance. It is important to call before going to see a doctor to discuss symptoms and possible places of exposure to limit the spread of illness.
- Sliding fee discounts at Community Health Centers and use of Emergency Medicaid are never counted under public charge.
- If a client is eligible and applies for Health First Colorado (Colorado’s Medicaid Program), use of Health First Colorado for COVID-19 related care will not be counted under public charge. Use of non-COVID-19 services may count under public charge.

Clients should consult an immigration attorney for specific questions. Free and low cost immigration attorneys in Colorado can be found here:

<https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/search?state=CO>

Use of Public Benefits During COVID-19 Pandemic



Immigrants who require public assistance due to job loss related to COVID-19 can include a written explanation of their situation and use of benefits in their application. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services will take these into consideration in the public charge test; however, the use of benefits may still be counted.