

Reference 2: Serving Immigrant Students



Serving Immigrant Students Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ provides guidance on how to include students of various immigration statuses in benefits access outreach. This document focuses on U.S. based immigrant students and not international students who have traveled to the U.S. on a student visa and are generally not eligible for public benefit programs in the U.S.

1. Should we include students who may be immigrants or undocumented in benefits outreach?

We recommend including students of any immigration status in your efforts to identify students who may be eligible for benefit programs. There are many categories of immigration and students may move from one immigration status to another. Additionally, some students live in households with mixed immigration statuses, meaning that even if a student isn't eligible for a particular benefit, someone in their household may be.

Historically, immigrants have lower rates of participation in benefit programs¹ for which they are eligible than non-immigrants. Including students of any immigration status in your efforts to identify and outreach to students will help your college avoid inadvertently excluding students who may benefit from these programs.

2. Are immigrant students eligible for benefits? Are undocumented students eligible for benefits?

There are many categories of immigration status that intersect with benefit programs in different ways. An immigrant student may be eligible for some benefit programs and not others, depending on their status and each program's rules.

3. Will immigrant students be concerned about applying for benefit programs?

Some students may have concerns that applying for benefit programs could jeopardize their safety, their families' safety, or their immigration status. Colleges and universities should certainly respect a student's choice not to apply for public benefit programs, and support students 1:1 in their decision making. [Food and Nutritional Services \(FNS\) has prioritized immigrant communities for SNAP outreach](#) in 2022, so we strongly encourage immigrant students be included in your outreach efforts.

4. How does the public charge rule intersect with immigrant students and benefits?

You, your staff, or students may have concerns about the public charge rule², which allows the federal government to deny an immigration application if the applicant is considered likely to "depend on government as their main source of support in the future." The public charge rule applies to a small population and only relates to certain benefit programs. Although the public charge rule may understandably concern immigrant students about the impact of applying for public benefits, given the narrow population the rule applies to and recent changes to the public charge rule, we recommend that colleges and universities include immigrant students in efforts to identify students potentially eligible for public benefit programs.

5. Additional resources

The National Immigration Law Center provides a resource on immigrant eligibility for federal programs [here](#), and information on the public charge rule [here](#).

¹ For more information on historical participation of immigrants in public benefit programs, see: Tanya Broder, Gabrielle Lessard, and Avidah Moussavian, "[Overview of Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs](#)," National Immigration Law Center, October 2022.

² For more information on the public charge rule, see: Protecting Immigrant Families, "[Public Charge: What Advocates Need to Know](#)," September 2022.