

August 14, 2019

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Department of Human Services statement on changes to “public charge” rule

Salem, Ore. -- On Monday, the Trump administration announced a new rule that makes it harder for immigrants who rely on certain government benefit programs to obtain lawful permanent residency if they are found to be a “public charge,” which means they have received public benefits or may receive them in the future.

The new public charge rule is scheduled to take effect October 15, 2019, and will expand the list of benefits that the federal government could consider when making decisions about lawful permanent residency. While some Department of Human Services (DHS)-administered benefits are already affected by the current rule, the new rule would impact additional benefits, such as Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) that serves more than 600,000 Oregonians, and some forms of Medicaid-funded services.

The Department of Human Services has identified that the greatest potential impact to program participation is the fear that the proposed public charge could affect immigration status for individuals or their families. This fear may lead to fewer families accessing benefits, even when some family members are citizens and have a legal right to our programs.

“When people - especially children and vulnerable adults - go hungry, lack medical care, and become homeless the impacts are far reaching and expensive. They are preventable and generate cost avoidance that can be refocused on other priorities that move our country forward,” Department of Human Services Director Fariborz Pakseresht wrote to the federal government about the proposed rule last December.

DHS encourages anyone who has questions about the federal public charge rule to:

- Contact an immigration attorney with questions about your case. Find one at <https://oregonimmigrationresource.org/resources/>.
- Contact Oregon’s Public Benefits Hotline at 800-520-5292 with questions about public benefits.

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