



Benefits for Asylum Seekers Who are Waiting for a Work Permit

Note: The “Public Charge” rule does not apply to people who are seeking asylum or who are asylees. Getting help with health care, food, housing, or other needs will not affect your ability to get a green card. Learn more at <https://pifcoalition.org/publiccharge2022>.

You may be eligible for the following benefits if:

You have applied for asylum and have a receipt from the federal government (USCIS) with your A number

OR

You had a work permit, that work permit has expired, and you are waiting for a new work permit to be issued



Health Care

For All Pregnant People and Children (under age 21), Regardless of Your Immigration Status:

You can get full MaineCare benefits for doctor’s visits, medications, or hospitalization. Apply at [your local DHHS office](#) or online at [My Maine Connection](#).

For Everyone Else:

Emergency MaineCare: You can get Emergency MaineCare. It only pays for health services that are needed to stabilize a serious health problem in an emergency.

Clinics and Hospitals: You have a right to get the medical care you need at any hospital in Maine, even if you can’t pay. Depending on your income and the facility, you can get Free Care or sliding-scale discounts to help cover the costs of care. To find out what services are covered by Free Care, call the hospital. *You can also visit [Consumers for Affordable HealthCare](#) or call their HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476 for more information or help applying.*

If you are not able to get health insurance, free clinics and [community health centers](#) can provide you with high-quality, basic health care services at no or low-cost. These clinics also give discounts, based on your household income.

If you do not have health insurance:

Portland Area Resources:

- [Care Partners](#):
 - Helps link uninsured people living in Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, Waldo and York counties to health care services.
 - Call 1-877-626-1684
- [Coverage Team](#) at MaineHealth:
 - To sign up for insurance or for more information on free care call 1-833-284-8816
- [Greater Portland Health](#)
 - Various locations in the greater Portland area
 - Call 207 -874-2141 for more information.
- [Portland Community Free Clinic](#)
 - 39 Forest Avenue, Portland
 - Call 207-874-8982

Lewiston Area Resources:

- **Sliding-Scale Clinics**
 - [CCS B Street Health Center](#)
57 Birch Street in Lewiston
Call 207-753-5400
 - [CCS Second Street Pediatric Dental Center](#)
60 Second Street in Auburn
Call 207-755-3456
 - [Western Maine Family Health](#) -
16 Depot Street in Livermore Falls, Suite 300
Call 207-897-4345
- [Free Women's Health Clinic](#) (pregnant women/parents)
87 College Street in Lewiston
207-577-1165
- [New Mainers Public Health Initiative](#)
(can give you information and help locally)
276 Lisbon St. #280 in Lewiston
Call 207-241-0546

Statewide Resources:

For more information on healthcare eligibility contact [Consumers for Affordable Health Care](#). You can call them at 1-800-965-7476.

For a longer list of health centers in Maine, visit [Maine Primary Care Association's website](#).



Rent and Other Basic Needs

General Assistance

General Assistance, or GA, helps pay for housing costs and other basic needs like food and medications. You must apply to the town or city where you live.

- You will need to show you do not have resources to pay for basic necessities.
- If you have applied for asylum and waiting for a decision, you will need to show *any* of the following forms of proof:
 - A notice of receipt
 - The first page of an asylum application
- If you intend to apply for asylum but have not submitted your application, you will need to show proof of pursuing an immigration process. You will need to show the following proof:
 - A signed form (called an affidavit) saying you are pursuing immigration process.AND if you have them, any of the following:
 - A notice to appear in court (if you applied through immigration court)
 - Alien number (*ONLY IF YOU HAVE ONE*)
 - Date of your hearing (*ONLY IF YOUR HEARING IS SCHEDULED*)
- Applying for rent? GA will want to contact your landlord to complete paperwork and possibly inspect your apartment.

Call the town office of the town or city where you live to make an appointment to apply. You have the right to fill out an application and to get a written decision. If you are denied you have the right to appeal, and the appeal will be heard within 5 days. For more information about GA, visit Pine Tree Legal Assistance's website by [clicking here](#).

If you live in one of these towns, contact:

- [Portland GA Office](#): 39 Forest Ave, Suite 2, Call 207-482-5122 (Call 207-775-2922 in an emergency or after office hours)
- [South Portland GA Office](#): Call 207-767-6717
- [Westbrook GA Office](#): 426 Bridge Street, Call 207-591-7015
- [Lewiston GA Office](#): 27 Pine Street, Call 207-513-3130 (Call 911 in an emergency or after office hours).

If you are not able to contact your local town office to apply for GA, or if you are told

126 Sewall Street Augusta, Maine 04330-6822

Updated: February 2024

Phone: (207) 626-7058 Fax: (207) 621-8148 www.maineequaljustice.org

that you cannot apply for GA, call the DHHS hotline at 1-800-442-6003.

Asylum-seeking families and others who have not yet been granted immigration relief or do not have any citizen children, who are denied General Assistance and/or facing eviction can contact [Maine Equal Justice](#).

The Opportunity Alliance

[The Opportunity Alliance offers rental assistance](#) of up to \$1000 to people in urgent situations in Cumberland County. You may be eligible if you are facing eviction.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program (TBRA)

If you live in Portland you may also be eligible to receive Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) to help pay for your rent. To apply for TBRA, ask GA for help or email Stephen Sinclair at sas@portlandmaine.gov.



Help with Food

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP helps people pay for food. You get an EBT card to use to buy food at grocery stores.

As an asylum seeker, you may be eligible for SNAP if you are waiting for work authorization or unemployed. When you get work authorization and start a new job, report this to DHHS within 10 days of starting your job by calling 1-855-797-4357 or by emailing farmington.dhhs@maine.gov.

You may also qualify for SNAP if you are disabled, 65 or older, or if you have experienced domestic violence.

You can apply at your [local DHHS office](#) or online at [My Maine Connection](#).

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

WIC is a program for low-income pregnant and postpartum people, and young children up to age 5, regardless of their immigration status. It provides healthy food, nutrition education, and health screenings at WIC clinics throughout the state, and eligibility is determined by a WIC staff member.

To apply, call your [nearest WIC office](#) to schedule an appointment or complete [this form](#) to have a WIC staff member call you to set up your first appointment.

For materials about WIC translated into multiple languages visit [Maine.gov](#).



Help for Families with Children

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF provides cash help to families with children living at home. TANF can help you pay for the basic needs of your family, like rent, heat, and diapers.

You may be eligible for TANF while you are waiting for work authorization. When you get work authorization and start a new job, report this to DHHS within 10 days of starting your job by calling 1-855-797-4357 or by emailing farmington.dhhs@maine.gov.

You may also qualify for TANF if you have children at home and you are disabled, 65 or older, or you have experienced domestic violence.

You can apply at your [local DHHS office](#) or online at [My Maine Connection](#).



Help for Elders and People with Disabilities

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI gives you cash to pay for basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. Sometimes people call this program Social Security.

You may be able to get SSI if you have low income AND:

- You are 65 or older; or
- You are blind or have a disability. (Having a “disability” means you have a serious physical or mental health problem and cannot work full-time for at least 12 months)

How to Apply for SSI if you are an asylum seeker:

First, apply for SSI at your local DHHS office.

Second, you will need to apply to the US Social Security Administration (SSA) and get a denial based on your immigration status. You may also need to apply for a social security card. You can find more information about how to apply [here](#).

After you have received a denial from Social Security based on your immigration status, Maine DHHS will ask for documents from your health care providers that prove you are disabled and will make a decision about your application.

Social Security OFFICE LOCATIONS:

- Portland Social Security Administration (SSA) Office
 - 1355 Congress Street, Floor #2 in Portland
 - Call: 1-877-319-3076
- Auburn Social Security Administration (SSA) Office
 - 600 Turner Street in Auburn
 - Call: 1-833-388-6432

If you do not live in Portland or Lewiston/Auburn and do not know where your SSA office is, you can [click here](#) and enter your zip code to get that information.



Help you can get by Filing your Taxes

Tax Credits

There are tax credits you might be eligible for, even if you have little or no income and have never filed taxes before.

- If you work and have low income, you may qualify for the state and federal [Earned Income Tax Credit](#).
- If you rent an apartment or own a home, you may qualify for the [Property Tax Fairness Credit](#).
- If you have little or no income, you may qualify for the [Sales Tax Fairness Credit](#).

Receiving federal tax credits that you are eligible for [will not](#) affect your immigration status, your ability to get a green card, or your future eligibility for immigration benefits. Use of federal tax credits is not considered for purposes of a "public charge" determination by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Tax credits will not count against federally funded public benefits, like TANF (income support), SNAP (food assistance), or MaineCare, but will count against General Assistance.

You do not need to have income for many of these credits, but you DO need to file taxes! If you don't have a Social Security Number but want to file taxes, you can file using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, or ITIN.

You can get FREE help starting the ITIN process and filing your taxes from a local, trusted organization, the CASH Coalition of Maine! Sign up at [CASH Maine](#).