



# Programs without Immigration Requirements in Massachusetts

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## Disclaimer and Introduction

This guide is for general information and is not meant as a substitute for legal advice. We recommend you speak with an experienced immigration advocate for advice about your specific situation. See the Legal section on page 5 for referrals.

Please note that people without documentation are **NOT** eligible for most **federal** programs. Eligibility for **state-funded** programs vary by state.

See **For Mixed Status Households** and the **Public Charge** section on page 7 for important information about applying for benefits. **Never use false documents when applying for any type of benefit.**

## Child Care

### Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Programs (CFCEs)

Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Programs are state funded by the Department of Early Education and Care. CFCEs provide services and resources to families with infants and young children through school age. CFCEs offer play groups, family workshops, and networking to community resources.

**For more information contact a local CFCE program:**

[mass.gov/info-details/coordinated-family-and-community-engagement-cfce-network](https://mass.gov/info-details/coordinated-family-and-community-engagement-cfce-network) or [mass.gov](https://mass.gov) and search for “Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Programs”

### Head Start / Early Head Start

Free early childhood and school readiness programs children up to age 5 with a low income. Services include education, health assessments, parent workshops and social services.

**Find a local program:** [massheadstart.org](https://massheadstart.org) or 1-866-763-6481

## Financial/Material Assistance

### American Friends Service Committee – Material Aid and Advocacy Program (MAAP)

Provides in season, adult clothing and shoes and hygiene kits. They also carry housewares including kitchen goods, dishware & flatware, cookware and linens. At the beginning of the school year, they provide students of all ages with backpacks and school supplies.

**For more information contact 617-876-5312 also see** [maapma.org/getting-support-at-maap](https://maapma.org/getting-support-at-maap)

### Solutions at Work – Children’s Clothing Exchange

Members trade their child’s outgrown clothing, books, toys, and gear for age-appropriate items. If you do not have children’s items to trade, you can volunteer your time to earn credits that you can use to receive items for your child.

**Hours: 10:00AM-3:00PM Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.**

**Location:** Basement of Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge MA 617 576-0039 Dial 1. Do NOT Park in the Church parking lot- you will be towed.

**For more information:** [solutionsatwork.org/our-programs/childrens-clothing-exchange/](https://solutionsatwork.org/our-programs/childrens-clothing-exchange/)

## Healthcare

### Children's Medical Security Plan

Children under the age of 19 may be eligible. There is no premium charge for children with family income under 200% of the federal poverty level; families with higher income would need to pay premiums.

Immunizations, doctor visits, mental health, dental and prescription drugs up to a capped amount are covered. Hospital care is covered through the Health Safety Net.

**Contact MGH Patient Financial Services: 617-726-2191 or MassHealth 1-800-841-2900**

### Health Safety Net (HSN)

The Health Safety Net is for Massachusetts residents with low to moderate income, or with large medical bills above a certain amount of their income, who do not have access to affordable health coverage. HSN has no immigration status requirements. HSN is not an insurance program; it provides free care at

participating hospitals and community health centers only. Massachusetts General Hospital and its Health Care Centers accept HSN. HSN does not cover all services (such as home health care, care in rehabilitation centers, etc.) You can apply at a Massachusetts community health center or acute care hospital.

**Contact MGH Patient Financial Services: 617-726-2191, your local community health center or acute care hospital or call the Health Safety Net Customer Service Center at 1-877-910-2100.**

### **MassHealth Standard - Pregnant People Only**

MassHealth is Massachusetts's Medicaid program for eligible people with a low income. Pregnant people with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level may be eligible for MassHealth Standard regardless of immigration status. Eligibility for postpartum coverage continues for 12 months post-partum.

**Contact MGH Patient Financial Services: 617-726-2191 or MassHealth 1-800-841-2900.**

### **MassHealth Limited**

People including noncitizens without documentation with a low income who don't qualify for MassHealth Standard because of their immigration status, can get MassHealth Limited. MassHealth Limited covers emergency medical expenses only.

See "For Mixed Status Households" section (p 7) for more information about applying for MassHealth for a citizen or legal resident family member.

**Contact MGH Patient Financial Services: 617-726-2191 or MassHealth: 1-800-841-2900**

### **Prescription Advantage**

A program for those not receiving prescription drug benefits under Medicaid/MassHealth. Income limits vary depending on age, Medicare eligibility and whether one has a disability.

For people with Medicare, Prescription Advantage is a secondary payer for prescription drugs. For those not eligible for Medicare, there is a deductible and co-payments based on income. Some may have all or part of their deductible waived. There is an annual out-of-pocket spending limit.

**For more information: 800-243-4636 or [massoptions.org/massoptions/](https://massoptions.org/massoptions/)**

**OR [mass.gov/prescription-drug-assistance](https://mass.gov/prescription-drug-assistance)**

### **Public Health Programs through the Department of Public Health (DPH)**

For immunization and treatment of communicable diseases.

**For more information call 617-983-6800 or visit the Department of Public Health website: [mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph](https://mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph)**

### **Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

Immigration status should not interfere with access to care for those who would otherwise be eligible for services. If you are asked to provide a social security number request to verify your identity with another form of identification.

**Contact: 617-626-8000 or [mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dmh/](https://mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dmh/)**

### **Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line**

Massachusetts residents can contact the 24/7 Behavioral Health Line. Get the treatment or support you need, find a provider, and make an appointment. Call or text **833-773-2445** or chat at [masshelpline.com](https://masshelpline.com). Helps in over 200 languages.

## Purchase Insurance through an Employer or Directly from the Insurer

Under the Affordable Care Act immigrants without documentation are NOT eligible to purchase coverage through the state exchanges such as MA HealthConnector. You **may** be able to purchase insurance through an employer or directly from the insurer.

## Home Care

### Elder Home Care Program (Through Local Aging Services Access Points)

Available to Massachusetts residents **age 60 or older, or under 60 with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease** who need help with certain care tasks. Most services have financial eligibility restrictions. Services include home-delivered meals, homemakers, personal care, transportation services, and respite for caregivers.

**For more Information:** 800-243-4636 or [massoptions.org/massoptions/](https://massoptions.org/massoptions/)

### Home Care Assistance Program (Through Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission)

Disabled adults **under age 60** who have low income and who need help with homemaking tasks can apply for the Home Care Assistance Program (HCAP). Income must be no greater than 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and there must not be any adult living in the house who can do homemaking tasks. Services include meal preparation, grocery shopping, medication pick-up, laundry, and light housekeeping. Most people get 3-4 hours of services per week; the maximum is 12 hours per week. Please note there is usually a waitlist for HCAP.

**For more Information:** 617-204-3853 or [mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/living-supports/home-care/under-60/](https://mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/living-supports/home-care/under-60/) or [mass.gov](https://mass.gov) and search for "HCAP"

## Housing

### Housing Assistance Programs

**Anyone with any immigration status** (who otherwise qualifies) **can apply for the following state and federal housing programs:**

#### State housing programs

- State public housing for families
- State public housing for elders and people with disabilities
- Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)
- Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP)
- State-funded multifamily housing
  - This includes 13A developments through MassHousing, and the SHARP program (State Housing Assistance for Rental Production).

For general information about State Housing programs: [masshousing.com](https://masshousing.com)

#### Federal housing programs

- A few federal multifamily buildings
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
- McKinney Homeless Programs (**except** for the McKinney Section 8 moderate rehabilitation program)
- Shelter Plus Care
- Supportive Housing
- HOME Rental Assistance
- Some Low-Income Housing Tax Credit properties

For more information about Federal Housing Programs: [hud.gov](https://www.hud.gov)

For more information on housing options, ask your MGH social worker for the [Applying for Subsidized Housing in Massachusetts](#) handout and the [Supplement: Options for Non-Citizens](#).

## Homelessness Prevention Funds - RAFT (Residential Assistance for Families in Transition)

Available to MA residents who have income below 50% of Area Median Income and are homeless or have an eligible housing crisis. Households do not need to have legal immigration status to qualify, however, any applicant or household member who has been issued a Social Security Number must provide it. Funds may be used for a variety of housing-related expenses.

For more information or to apply contact your local Regional Housing Provider: [masshousinginfo.org/](https://masshousinginfo.org/)

## Shelters

Shelters for homeless **adults** generally have no income restrictions or documentation requirements. Help is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Visit the MA Coalition for the Homeless website for up-to-date shelter lists: [mahomeless.org/get-help](https://mahomeless.org/get-help)

## Legal

### Free/Low-Cost Immigration Law Clinics

**Boston Residents:** The Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement offers **free immigration clinics**. See the website for schedule: [boston.gov/departments/immigrant-advancement/free-immigration-consultations](https://boston.gov/departments/immigrant-advancement/free-immigration-consultations)

**The Rian Immigrant Center** offers free immigration clinics **open to immigrants from any country**: [riancenter.org/what/immigration-legal-services/](https://riancenter.org/what/immigration-legal-services/)

### Immigration Law

Here are some immigration attorney referral services:

**The MIRA Coalition's legal service providers page** (listings in MA, NH, & RI): [miracoalition.org/resources/legal-services/](https://miracoalition.org/resources/legal-services/)

**The Massachusetts Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service:** 866-627-7577 or [masslawhelp.com/](https://masslawhelp.com/).

## Nutrition

### Fair Foods- Two-Dollars-A-Bag Program

For a donation of two dollars, families receive approximately 15 pounds. of groceries. Two-Dollars-A-Bag program sites are located throughout the Commonwealth at churches, schools, and senior complexes.

Find a site: [fairfoods.org/](https://fairfoods.org/) or 617-288-6185

### Food Pantries

Food pantries are independent community organizations, often run by churches, that provide food staples to people in need. Some pantries may require identification and/or proof of residency for each household member. According to the MA Attorney General, food pantries cannot require identification to be a photo ID or SSNs.

**Project Bread's The FoodSource Hotline 1-800-645-8333**

## Meals on Wheels

Delivers prepared meals to homebound seniors, aged 60 or older who are unable to shop or cook for themselves. Donations are suggested, but no senior will be denied for an inability to pay.

Meals on Wheels are coordinated through either the Council on Aging or the local ASAP. **Call 800-243-4636 or visit [massoptions.org/massoptions/](https://massoptions.org/massoptions/) or [mealsonwheelsamerica.org/](https://mealsonwheelsamerica.org/)**

## National School Lunch Program

The state of Massachusetts offers universal school lunch. This applies to K-12 students in public schools, nonprofit private schools, and residential care institutions.

Please note families may still receive charges if a student gets an extra lunch, or other single items like cookies or ice cream.

**Eligible families are still encouraged to apply** as eligibility may offer additional benefits to the family and school.

**More Information/Application:** [fns.usda.gov/nslp](https://fns.usda.gov/nslp)

## Summer Meals Program

Provides free, nutritious meals to low-income children during school vacations. There is no application necessary for most Summer Food Programs in Massachusetts. All children from the community who go to a Summer Food site can get free meals and snacks.

To find out more about the summer program, call the local school department or the **FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333**.

A list of Summer Food Program sites with free food is announced at the end of each school year. For a list of sites in a specific area, select the city or town from the list of Summer Food Service Programs on the Meals4Kids web site [meals4kids.org/find-summer-meal-site](https://meals4kids.org/find-summer-meal-site)

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

Provides food vouchers for nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care to low-income pregnant people, infants, & children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk.

**For more information or to find a local WIC office visit [mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/food/wic/](https://mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/food/wic/) or [mass.gov](https://mass.gov) and search for “WIC”**

## Transportation

### The RIDE

The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) offers the RIDE which provides door-to-door transportation for persons with disabilities who cannot use regular public transit in the Greater Boston area. This program does not require a social security number.

**For more information:** <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/the-ride> or **617-337-2727** to schedule an in-person assessment.

## Utility Assistance

Note: **immigrants without documentation are no longer eligible for Fuel Assistance/LIHEAP**. See “For Mixed Status Households” below for more information.

## Good Neighbor Energy Fund

Available to any Massachusetts resident who, because of temporary financial difficulty, cannot meet a month's energy expense and is not eligible for state or federal energy assistance. Applications are made through your local Salvation Army.

**For more information and to locate a Salvation Army:** [magoodneighbor.org/assistance.html](http://magoodneighbor.org/assistance.html)

## Utility Discounts

Discount utility rates offered by utility companies for people receiving public benefits and/or fuel assistance.

**Call your utility company to find out what discounts they may offer to customers with low income.**

## Utility Shutoff Protection

To secure shut-off protection or restore service due to “serious illness” of someone in the household, a customer must show financial hardship. Any family living at or below 60% of Area Median Income automatically qualifies for “financial hardship.” But families with slightly higher income may also qualify. Consumers must complete and submit a financial hardship form (each company uses a different one, which may need to be renewed quarterly). Certain other groups of people are also protected from utility shut-off. See the link below for more information.

**Utility Advocacy for Low-Income Households:** [masslegalservices.org/docs/utility-handbook-2d-ed.pdf](http://masslegalservices.org/docs/utility-handbook-2d-ed.pdf)

## Federal Poverty Level

The Federal Poverty Level determines financial eligibility for many programs; please see the current charts here: [masslegalservices.org/content/federal-poverty-guidelines](http://masslegalservices.org/content/federal-poverty-guidelines).

## For Mixed Status Households

A “mixed status household” includes people with different citizenship and immigration statuses (such as a couple without documentation with a citizen child). Some programs, especially federal programs, have strict rules for immigrant eligibility. However, if you are **an immigrant without documentation you may apply for your citizen or qualified alien family member**. Your income is counted to see if the household is eligible, but only the eligible family member(s) would receive the benefit. In Massachusetts, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) accepts applications for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP (“food stamps”). DTA says in the brochures linked below that they will not report you to immigration authorities **unless you show them a final order of deportation**. See the Public Charge section below for more important information.

See the Massachusetts DTA brochure “What Noncitizens Need to Know.”

[masslegalservices.org/content/dtas-brochure-what-non-citizens-need-know-english-and-7-translations](http://masslegalservices.org/content/dtas-brochure-what-non-citizens-need-know-english-and-7-translations)

Eligible members of mixed status households may apply for programs such as SNAP (food stamps), TAFDC, LIHEAP (fuel assistance), EA shelter, MassHealth, and income-eligible childcare. Please ask your social worker for more information.

## Public Charge

Public Charge is a term used by the immigration service to describe immigrants that officials believe will become primarily dependent on public benefits. Depending on your immigration status, the USCIS and State Department consular officers abroad can refuse to let you enter the U.S., re-enter the U.S., or become a permanent resident, if they think you will not be able to support yourself in the future without depending on public benefits.

**People without documentation are not eligible for the public benefits that are part of the public charge test.** Receiving MassHealth Limited, Health Safety Net and MassHealth for people who are pregnant (and up to 12 months after pregnancy ends), for example, will NOT make you a public charge.

**We strongly advise you to talk with an experienced immigration attorney before disenrolling from any benefits or applying for any new benefits that are not on this list of programs without immigration status requirements.** The rules are complex.

**See Protecting Immigrant Families' Public Charge page for more information and updates:**  
<https://pifcoalition.org/our-work/public-charge>.

## Questions About Your Immigration Status?

We recommend you seek advice from an experienced immigration advocate for your specific situation, especially before going to a USCIS office. See Legal section on page 5 for more information.