



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

February 9, 2010

Attention: Low-Income Immigrants
Subject: Food Stamps Will Not Affect Potential Applicants for USCIS Benefits

Dear Customers:

The U.S. Government wants to ensure that you receive food assistance if you are eligible under the Food Stamp Program. This nutrition program of the United States Department of Agriculture is meant to assure the health and well-being of you and your family.

Many immigrants have fears or misunderstanding about how services like Food Stamps may affect their immigration status.

As a District Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which is formerly known as INS, I want to assure you that applying for and receiving food stamps will have no impact on your application to become, or your status as, a permanent resident.

When you are applying to become a permanent resident, you are not considered a "public charge" if you are using food programs, such as Food Stamps, WIC and school meals, health care benefits or other programs that do not give cash.

USCIS officers will not ask you if you receive non-cash benefits as those listed above. The only time USCIS officers can ask about an immigrant's use of food stamps is when the interviewing officer suspects that benefits were used illegally or acquired in a fraudulent manner.

We want to encourage you to access Food Stamps and assistance programs for which you may be eligible without fear of their affect on your immigration status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane E. Arellano". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Jane E. Arellano
District Director
District 23