



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

March 3, 2004

Dear Community-Based Organizations:

The Federal Government wants to ensure that all eligible low-income households receive the food assistance to which they are entitled under the Food Stamp Program since food stamps can help these households lead healthy and productive lives. However, current data show that many low-income immigrant households are not receiving food stamps partly because of fears or misunderstandings that immigrants may have that receiving food stamps may adversely impact their immigration status. These fears and misconceptions are simply wrong.

I would like to take this opportunity to ensure that community based organizations understand the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S. CIS- formerly known as INS) policy on this issue.

Aliens who are applying for lawful permanent residence, adjustment of status and citizenship are not considered a public charge if they use such programs as health care benefits, food programs (including Food Stamps, WIC and school meals) along with other programs that do not give cash.

All USCIS officers have been provided instructions **not to ask** alien applicants if they receive or have received non-cash benefits such as those noted above. (The only time U.S. CIS can ask about an immigrant's use of food stamps is when the interviewing officer suspects benefits were used illegally or acquired in a fraudulent manner).

We encourage you in your community to make sure that your clients are aware of the programs that are available to them that will have no impact on either their application for permanent resident status or their permanent resident status once granted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane E. Arellano".

Jane E. Arellano
District Director