

ELIGIBILITY OF COFA MIGRANTS FOR CERTAIN PUBLIC BENEFITS PROGRAMS IN THE STATE OF HAWAII

Citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau have the right to live and work in the United States under the Compact of Free Association (COFA). COFA migrants living in Hawaii qualify for many but not all public benefit programs.

HEALTH INSURANCE

- COFA Migrants who are in the United States can qualify for Medicaid Insurance if they are low-income. To apply they must obtain a social security number which they can do by visiting an office of the Social Security Administration and presenting their passport and I-94 entry document. I-94 entry documents can be obtained at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>
- COFA Migrants who have incomes over the income threshold for Medicaid and do not have insurance provided by their employer may be able to obtain low-cost insurance under the Affordable Care Act at healthcare.gov

UNEMPLOYMENT

- COFA Migrants who become unemployed may qualify for unemployment. Claimants can apply online at <https://huiclaims.hawaii.gov/#/login>. Those who would like language assistance with applications can call (833) 901-2272, (808) 762-5751, (833) 901-2275 or (808) 762-5752, <https://labor.hawaii.gov/ui/mah> (for Marshallese interpretation) and <https://labor.hawaii.gov/ui/chk> (for Chuukese Interpretation).

FEMA – DISASTER RELIEF

- COFA Migrants affected by the recent wildfires can qualify for FEMA disaster relief including assistance for both displaced renters and homeowners if one or more member of the household is a U.S. Citizen (or has a qualifying immigration status). The U.S. citizen or qualifying immigrant may be a child. For those without a qualifying household member, they may still qualify for short-term, non-cash, emergency assistance.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INCLUDING SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE

- COFA Migrants who have limited income may qualify for subsidized housing programs including public housing and rental assistance. COFA Migrants have a “qualifying immigration status” for the purposes of these programs. COFA Migrants facing homelessness also qualify for emergency shelter programs. There are no immigration restrictions related to emergency shelter.

SNAP (FOOD STAMPS)

- At this time, COFA Migrants do not qualify for SNAP. However, U.S. Citizen children of COFA Migrants do qualify for SNAP if the family is financially eligible. Parents may file applications on behalf of their children even if the parents themselves do not qualify. Parents who do not qualify will be considered non-eligible household members for the purposes of the application. They still must report their income and comply with the SNAP program requirements, but benefits will only be issued for the qualifying family members.

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

- COFA Migrants do qualify for WIC. WIC is a food assistance program for pregnant women, mothers with infants, and young children under the age of five who meet income guidelines and have a medical or nutritional risk.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY AND RETIREMENT

- COFA Migrants who have worked for a sufficient amount of time in the U.S. (usually at least 10 years but may be less depending on age) and become disabled may qualify for Social Security Disability benefits. COFA Migrants who reach retirement age and have 40 work credits (at least 10 years of work history), may qualify for Social Security Retirement benefits. COFA Migrants are not eligible for Supplemental Security Income.

STATE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- COFA Migrants who are low-income and have minor children living in their household may qualify for financial benefits from the state through the State of Hawaii’s Temporary Assistance for Other Needy Families (TAONF) program. COFA Migrants who do not have minor children and are blind, disabled or over the age of 65 may qualify for financial assistance through the State of Hawaii’s General Assistance program or Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled.