

“Public Charge Rule” Going Into Effect



The Supreme Court of the United States ruled on January 24th to allow the Trump administration to begin enforcing the “public charge rule” which would make it harder for immigrants to get a green card. The nationwide injunction was lifted while lower courts are continuing multiple legal challenges against the rule (except for Illinois, where a federal appeals court has upheld a state-wide injunction).

This week U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced that the public charge rule will go into effect on February 24, 2020. The final rule will only apply to applications submitted on or after February 24, 2020. Medicaid, SNAP, HUD public housing, and “Section 8” housing benefits received before this date will not be considered in the public charge determination.

“Public charge” refers to a person who is considered likely to become primarily dependent on the government for support. The rule was expanded to include programs such as Medicaid, Section 8 and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The “public charge” determination will take into consideration many factors, called the “totality of the circumstances,” that includes age, health, income and education.

We want to encourage individuals to make informed decisions and not to disenroll from benefits without first consulting an immigration expert to see whether they may be affected by the new rules. A great resource for information and legal service referrals is the Office for New Americans hotline at 1-800-566-7636. Also visit [Protecting Immigrant Families](#) for up to date information.

For now, the DHS public charge rule is in place. But, the legal battle is not over and we will continue to keep fighting!

Increase in Homeless Deaths

City agencies released the most recent report of homeless deaths in NYC. Between July of 2018 and June 2019, 404 homeless individuals died in NYC. This represents a 39 percent increase over the prior year, the largest increase in a decade and the highest number since the city started compiling this report in 2006. The leading cause of death was related to drugs, followed by heart disease, alcoholism and accidents. Most of the individuals were men between the ages of 45 and 64.



Photo Credit: Karen Smul

This annual report provides an analysis of patterns and trends which offers critical insight to understanding the health challenges faced by this community. For example, since 2016 the city has trained shelter staff and residents to use Naloxone, an important intervention to reverse an opioid overdose. It also provides insight in to the effectiveness of health interventions and highlights the need to ensure that individuals discharged from hospitals are being linked to health services outside of the emergency room.

People experiencing homelessness are 3-4 time more likely to die prematurely as compared to the general population, losing an average of 20 years as compared to their housed counterparts. Conditions among people who are homeless are frequently co-occurring, with a complex mix of physical, psychiatric and substance use issues. High stress, unhealthy environments, and an inability to control food intake often results in visits to emergency rooms and hospitalizations which leads to a decline in overall health.

Our mission at Care For the Homeless, and one of most important tools to fight homelessness, is to ensure that unstably housed individuals have access to ongoing, comprehensive and high-quality health care. As this report highlights, any plan to end homelessness must include reducing the barriers to accessing medical and mental health services for all who need it.

Criminalizing Homelessness

In the summer of 2019, Mayor De Blasio piloted a program that looked to offer supportive services to homeless individuals in lieu of summonses for transit violations on NYC subways. Pushed as an alternative to involvement with the criminal justice system it has in fact become a way to criminalize individuals experiencing homelessness who take refuge in the subways by making them targets of the NYPD. Those who refuse to engage with outreach workers, are given a summons, for no other offense than being homeless and in plain sight.

Last month advocates, service providers, elected officials and people with the lived experience of homelessness held a rally outside of City Hall to condemn the “subway diversion program”. Following that rally, the Public Safety Committee, chaired by Council Member Donovan Richards, and the General Welfare Committee, chaired by Council Member Stephen Levin, held an oversight hearing to discuss the program. The NYPD and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) representatives fielded questions about the program from concerned Council Members.

In that hearing it was reported that between September and November of 2019, the NYPD wrote 1296 summonses. Of those, 477 were cancelled because the individuals agreed to engage with outreach workers, (305 went in to shelter and 172 accepted full assessment). That means that 819, or 63% of those summonses have not been cleared. There was no data to show if any of the people that went into the shelter system stayed for more than one day.

Involving the NYPD undercuts the extensive work that outreach workers are doing every day to try and engage individuals on the streets and in the subways to receive services. Especially if the outreach worker simply does not have the resources, such as the availability of permanent housing, on the back end to ensure that the individuals will not end up back on the streets again. Criminalizing and stigmatizing individuals who are dealing with trauma every day does nothing in the way of addressing the root causes of homelessness.

If you would like more information, please visit diversioniscoercion.nyc.



Source: AMNY.com

The Busy Advocate's February Calendar

February is Black History Month.

Tue., Feb. 11, 12:00 p.m., NYC City Stated Meeting, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

Thur., Feb. 20, 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., CFH Consumer Advisory Board Meeting, 30 E. 33rd Street, 5th floor conference room, Manhattan, NY, 10016.

Thur., Feb. 27, 12:00 p.m., NYC City Stated Meeting, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

Mon., Mar. 2, Advocacy Day for New York's Community Health Centers and Their Patients, Advocates will head to Albany to advocate for issues involving homelessness and healthcare.