



# THE 2023 COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION AMENDMENTS UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPACT BENEFITS: NEW ELIGIBILITY FOR DOMESTIC PROGRAMS

COFA<sup>AMENDMENTS OF</sup> 2023

#2 IN A SERIES OF FACT SHEETS ON THE COMPACT AMENDMENTS OF 2023 • FSM EMBASSY, WASHINGTON • UPDATED JUNE 20, 2024

The FSM Embassy continues to actively work with the U.S. Government to ensure that new and restored benefits under the Compact of Free Association Amendments of 2023, which was signed into law on March 9, 2024, are made available to FSM citizens who are living in the U.S. as quickly as possible and that relevant U.S. agencies are prepared to implement the new benefits.

The following update provides a status summary regarding these new and restored benefits as of June 20, 2024. The FSM Embassy will continue to update this document as needed.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) PROGRAMS

Officials from the U.S. Department of HHS continue to issue guidance to state-level grantees to make clear that FSM citizens living in the U.S. are eligible to participate in the following programs. In recent weeks, HHS has issued announcements confirming that COFA migrants in the United States are entitled to participate in the following programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and Social Services Block Grants (SSBG) Updated information is available on the HHS website and will be communicated by HHS to grantees.



### Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The TANF program provides states with flexibility in operating programs designed to help low-income families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency. The federal government does not provide TANF cash assistance directly to the public. Instead, states use their TANF grants to fund monthly cash assistance payments to low-income families with children, as well as other services. Eligibility is determined at the state-level.

### Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP consists of block grants to assist households with low incomes, particularly those with the lowest

incomes that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their immediate home energy needs. LIHEAP provides assistance in managing costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, and weatherization and energy-related minor home repairs.

### Social Services Block Grants (SSBG)

Block grants support social services directed towards achieving economic self-sufficiency; preventing or remedying neglect, abuse, or the exploitation of children and adults; preventing or reducing inappropriate institutionalization; and securing referrals for institutional care, where appropriate.

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### In-State Tuition and Title IV Eligibility

Beginning July 1, 2024, as stated in a directive by the U.S. Department of Education, eligible students who are FSM citizens living in the FSM or U.S. and attending an institution of higher education will be eligible for the following:



- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)
- Federal Work Study Program (FWS)

Also beginning July 1, 2024, FSM citizens living in the U.S. and attending a U.S. public institution of higher education will be eligible for in-state tuition.

## SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA) PROGRAMS

### Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI provides monthly payments to people with disabilities and older adults who have little or no income or resources. Guam does not provide SSI benefits to any of its residents because U.S. federal law doesn't include Guam in the SSI program. FSM citizens living in Guam therefore will not be eligible to receive SSI monthly payments.



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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROGRAMS

USDA officials will need to issue guidance to make clear that FSM citizens living in the U.S. are eligible to participate in the following program.



**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**  
SNAP provides food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford the nutritious food essential to health and well-being. We are hoping there will be a USDA announcement in the near future.

## FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) PROGRAMS

COFA citizens in the United States are now entitled to benefits under the FEMA Individuals and Households Program. In a April 2, 2024, announcement addressing the Maui wildfires, FEMA stated, "COFA citizens who were previously ineligible for FEMA disaster assistance due to their COFA status to now apply for FEMA's Individuals and Households program."



## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) PROGRAMS

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required to work with the FSM Government to facilitate increased services for FSM veterans of U.S. military service who are living in the FSM. The FSM looks forward to working with the VA to improve the delivery of health care for these veterans.



Once implemented, the Secretary of Veteran Affairs will have new discretion to furnish hospital and medical care in the FSM for veterans of U.S. military service, including through contracts with community providers in the FSM. This provision is a new exception to the general rule in U.S. law that the VA may not provide this care outside of the United States. This new authority also allows the Secretary to provide care for non-service-connected conditions.

The Secretary will also have new authority to provide payments to help fund FSM veterans traveling in, to, or from the FSM to another FAS to access medical care.

The Embassy is in regular communications with the VA and have asked for consultations on bilateral agreement and any signs of progress. 🌐

## INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE

All of the U.S. federal agencies mentioned here regularly post updates on benefit eligibility on their official web sites. In addition to updates from the FSM Embassy, we recommend regularly checking these resources for the latest information regarding eligibility of FAS citizens.

Listed below are direct links to the main agency sites as well as to the specific notifications mentioned in the text.

### HHS

[Main site](https://www.hhs.gov) (https://www.hhs.gov)

[Announcement on TANF](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/acf-ofa-pi-24-02) (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/acf-ofa-pi-24-02)

[Announcement on LIHEAP](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/acf-ofa-pi-24-02) (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/acf-ofa-pi-24-02)

[Announcement on SSBG](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/policy-guidance/ssbgim-2024-01-changes-ssbg-eligibility-citizens-countries-governed-compacts) (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/policy-guidance/ssbgim-2024-01-changes-ssbg-eligibility-citizens-countries-governed-compacts)

### Department of Education

[Main site](https://www.ed.gov) (https://www.ed.gov)

[Directive on in-state tuition and Title IV eligibility](https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2024-04-29/state-tuition-and-title-iv-eligibility-citizens-freely-associated-states) (https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2024-04-29/state-tuition-and-title-iv-eligibility-citizens-freely-associated-states)

### SSA

[Main site](https://www.ssa.gov) (https://www.ssa.gov)

### USDA

[Main site](https://www.usda.gov) (https://www.usda.gov)

### FEMA

[Main site](https://www.fema.gov) (https://www.fema.gov)

[Maui wildfire announcement](https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240401/cofa-wildfire-survivors-may-now-apply-fema-disaster-assistance) (https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240401/cofa-wildfire-survivors-may-now-apply-fema-disaster-assistance)