



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

COFA^{AMENDMENTS OF} 2023

FACT SHEETS ON THE 2023 COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION AMENDMENTS • FSM EMBASSY, WASHINGTON • UPDATED DEC. 5, 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 December 5, 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

Title IV Eligibility and In-State Tuition

Effective 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 are 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 are 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.



The Social Security Administration [notified the FSM by letter dated September 18, 2024](#), that it is accepting applications from FSM citizens for Supplemental Security Income benefits. The SSA indicated that it would be holding and reviewing potentially eligible cases until specific SSA processing instructions are developed. The date of filing an application with SSA will establish a "protective filing date" for determining what months the person can get SSI if the applicant is approved. SSA also said it was developing system processing instructions to allow it to process cases using its SSI claims processing system,

(Continued on reverse)

and is going to update its publications, web pages, and its “frequently asked questions” to provide information to COFA individuals and their potential eligibility for SSI benefits.

Subsequently, the Embassy received notice that the SSA had begun processing FSM SSI claims effective November 22, 2024.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROGRAMS

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.



Effective March 9, 2024, COFA citizens lawfully residing in the United States are immediately eligible for SNAP benefits as long as they meet all other SNAP financial and non-financial eligibility requirements.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) PROGRAMS

COFA citizens in the United States are now entitled to benefits under the FEMA Individuals and Households Program. The agency announced the change on April 2, 2024, following the Maui wildfires. [FEMA subsequently made a general announcement confirming eligibility for this program for all COFA migrants.](#)



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 location to access medical care.

The Embassy is in regular communications with the VA and have asked for consultations on the bilateral agreement as well as notification of any signs of progress. 🇺🇸

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE

In addition to updates from the FSM Embassy, we recommend regularly checking the on-line resources below for the latest information on FSM citizens' eligibility for programs and benefits:

[USA.gov](#)

- [Benefits Locator](#)

This centralized resource is a good starting point for FSM citizens seeking information on federal benefits available in the United States and its territories..

[Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#)

- [Announcement on TANF](#)
- [Announcement on LIHEAP](#)
- [Announcement on SSBG](#)

[Department of Education](#)

- [Directive on in-state tuition and Title IV eligibility](#)

[Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#)

- [Letter concerning FSM applications](#)

[Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)

- [FAS eligibility](#)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#)

- [Qualifying for FEMA Disaster Assistance: Citizenship and Immigration Status Requirements](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#)

[Department of Interior \(DOI\)](#)

- [The COFAs and Living in the United States](#)