

Qualifying for Disaster Assistance – Citizenship and Immigration Status Requirements

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To be eligible for federal assistance, disaster survivors must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals, or qualified non-citizens. Survivors who do not qualify for federal assistance may still call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362 for referrals to voluntary agencies.

Assistance for survivors who meet the eligibility criteria include assistance for temporary housing, home repair, personal property, medical losses, funeral expenses, disaster unemployment assistance and low-interest loans.

Many forms of disaster assistance, such as crisis counseling, legal services, case management, Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP), and short-term, non-cash assistance, such as search and rescue, medical care, shelter, food and water are available to individuals and families regardless of citizenship status.

Qualified non-citizens are defined as:

- Legal permanent residents (“green card” holders).
- Non-citizens granted asylum.
- Refugees.
- Anyone whose deportation is being withheld for at least one year.
- Anyone in the U. S. for humanitarian reasons for at least one year.
- Certain Cuban/Haitian entrants.
- Battered non-citizens, or their spouses or children.
- Victims of human trafficking.

If a survivor does not meet the required citizenship or immigration status criteria, they may still apply and be considered for assistance if:



- The parent or legal guardian of a minor child who is a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified non-citizen applies on behalf of the minor child, so long as they live in the same household. The parent or legal guardian must apply as the co-applicant, and the minor child must be under age 18 when the disaster occurred.

There are several categories of non-citizens legally present in the U.S. who are not eligible for assistance, such as foreign students and temporary or work visa holders.

- Demonstrating occupancy and ownership of the damaged residence is required for certain types of assistance and the applicant must meet FEMA's citizenship requirements. When an application is based on a minor child's eligibility, the following requirements apply:
 - Occupancy: The co-applicant must be the child's parent or legal guardian and prove they occupied the disaster-damaged residence at the time of the disaster.
 - Ownership: The co-applicant must be the child's parent or legal guardian and prove they own the disaster-damaged residence.

All disaster assistance will be provided without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex (including sexual orientation), religion, national origin, age, disability, limited English proficiency, or economic status. If a survivor believes their civil rights are being violated, they may call the FEMA Helpline. If they use a video relay service, captioned telephone service, or other communication services, the survivor should provide FEMA the specific number assigned for that service.

