

CHECKLIST · CALIFORNIA

Moving to California Checklist: The First 90 Days

What newcomers should do, in order, with short deadlines and where to do it. Print it and check items off.

SHORT ANSWER

Two critical deadlines share the same 10-day window in California: if you are subject to the address-reporting requirement, report your new address to USCIS, and your previous driver's license is valid in California for only 10 days after you establish residency (Vehicle Code §12505). In the first week, enroll your children in school and set up service with your local electric/gas provider. Within 20 days, buy California insurance and pay your car's registration fees to the DMV; within 90 days, look into the Homeowners' Exemption if you bought a home.

First 10 days

TASK	WHERE / HOW
☐ Report your address to USCIS (AR-11)	As a general rule, required for most noncitizens, including green card holders; A and G visa holders and Visa Waiver visitors are exempt. USCIS online account: uscis.gov/addresschange
☐ Book the DMV and switch to a California license	Your previous license is valid for only 10 days after you establish residency (Vehicle Code §12505(c)); DMV office locator: dmv.ca.gov/portal/locations
☐ In immigration court? File EOIR-33	Within 5 days: respondentaccess.eoir.justice.gov
☐ ICE check-in obligations?	Update ICE too: portal.ice.gov
☐ Change your address with USPS	Separate from USCIS; one does not update the other.

First week

TASK	WHERE / HOW
☐ Electricity and gas service	Depends on your area: PG&E, Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas & Electric, or (inside the City of Los Angeles) the municipal LADWP. If you qualify by income, look at the CARE/FERA discounts (cpuc.ca.gov); LADWP is outside that program and runs its own assistance instead.
☐ School enrollment	Your district's enrollment page (for example, enroll.lausd.net for LAUSD); no SSN is needed, and immigration status may not be asked.
☐ SSN application (if eligible)	Start online, then visit an SSA office: ssa.gov

Within 20 days

TASK	WHERE / HOW
☐ California insurance	Get a policy meeting at least \$30,000/\$60,000/\$15,000, required before you register your car.
☐ Smog certificate (if required)	Required for most gasoline vehicles from 1976 on that come from out of state; do not hold the registration payment for a missing certificate.
☐ Vehicle registration	Pay DMV within 20 days: Form REG 343, your old title/registration, REG 31 verification. dmv.ca.gov
☐ FasTrak / ExpressLanes account	Depends on your area: Metro ExpressLanes in Los Angeles (metroexpresslanes.net), Bay Area bridges, or Orange County's The Toll Roads.
☐ Keep a copy of your lease	Useful as a residency document for DMV and school enrollment.

Within 90 days

TASK	WHERE / HOW
☐ Bought a home? Homeowners' Exemption	A statewide exemption that reduces your assessed value by \$7,000 for an owner-occupied home; contact your county Assessor's office to apply.
☐ Turkish citizens: consulate services	Turkish Consulate General in Los Angeles (Beverly Hills), appointments at konsolosluk.gov.tr

IF YOU ARE NOT A U.S. CITIZEN

- Never check "U.S. citizen" on any form and never register to vote; California's jury statute also disqualifies noncitizens from serving.
- Talk to an immigration attorney before applying for Medi-Cal, CalFresh or any other public benefit: since January 1, 2026, new full-scope Medi-Cal enrollment has been frozen for undocumented adults 19 and older, CalFresh eligibility narrowed for some categories on April 1, 2026, and the public charge rule in force since September 18, 2026 can weigh these benefits.
- Check your I-94 at i94.cbp.dhs.gov. Your license term and work authorization depend on it.
- With a green card application pending, do not travel abroad without advance parole.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN CALIFORNIA

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients across California, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation:

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Office: 321 N Central Expy, Ste 206, McKinney, TX 75070

Attorney responsible for this guide: Asim Clinch, Esq., Clinch Law Firm P.C. Attorney Asim Clinch is a member of the Missouri Bar (No. 76084) and practices U.S. federal immigration law.

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