



2022 Guidance for Postbaccalaureate Programs on Considering Applicants with Undocumented Status (DACA, TPS, or no SSN)

This brief communication guides postbaccalaureate programs on considering undocumented applicants with temporary benefits or protections in the United States and applicants without a Social Security Number (SSN). These temporary protections include Temporary Protective Status (TPS)* or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)**. We want to encourage programs to strengthen the holistic support provided to undocumented students pursuing postbaccalaureate programs at their institutions.

This information is intended for decision-makers and leaders who influence postbaccalaureate programs and advisors who support students at different levels of their educational journey. Pre-Health Dreamers (PHD) encourages fair consideration of prospective postbaccalaureate students living with various immigration circumstances in the US. Upon review of applications, you will find that students with immigrant backgrounds, especially undocumented students, have a wide breadth of life experiences, cultural agility, linguistic expertise, unique perspectives, and a desire to train in underserved areas.¹ Each individual has overcome significant obstacles as they pursue higher education. They are persistent and passionate in their educational attainment despite substantial odds. Many students with and without DACA or TPS have been enrolling in professional programs nationwide for the last decade. Pre-Health Dreamers and our community and network hope that postbaccalaureate programs become welcoming to strong program candidates, applicants, and prospective students regardless of their immigration status.

These students' experiences can enrich the diversity in health professional programs. Subsequently, these future health professionals with different immigration backgrounds can address patients' diverse needs when seeking healthcare². Lastly, individuals with DACA, TPS, and those without a Social Security Number can help meet the rising demand for a diverse healthcare workforce.

Sincerely,

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* Temporary Protective Status (TPS): The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. USCIS may grant TPS to eligible nationals of certain countries (or parts of countries), who are already in the United States.

** Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): On June 15, 2012, the secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible for work authorization.

How Postbaccalaureate Programs Can Support Undocumented Students

Financial aid assistance is limited for DACA and TPS recipients and individuals without an SSN. More and more institutions are seeking creative ways to help undocumented students finance their programs through grants and scholarships for tuition, room and board, books, emergencies, and DACA renewal.

- If institutional aid for students does not have federal restrictions, schools can choose to remove the institutional US citizenship requirement so it can become accessible to undocumented students.
- Institutions are encouraged to create a task force that includes key coordinators, directors, deans, investment or endowment offices, and other decision-makers who can leverage their knowledge and community connections to create funding for students.
- Working with students to secure financial aid assistance, fee waivers, mental health services, legal and holistic counseling should be prioritized.
- We encourage schools to omit language that indicates a student's undocumented status in their data systems. Schools are encouraged to use coding that keeps students' undocumented status confidential (e.g. Resident for campus purposes only, Citizenship Undetermined, etc.)

Institutions are encouraged to create partnerships with healthcare sites that welcome all students who wish to intern, observe, volunteer, or work. Sites can establish welcoming processes to support onboarding undocumented students with DACA, TPS, or without SSN.

- Provisions in the Civil Rights Act and the Immigration Reform and Control Act prohibit employers from discriminating based on national origin or, in some cases, citizenship status, thereby providing opportunities for DACA and TPS recipients seeking employment.
- DACA and TPS recipients can be treated like other candidates as they have the necessary documentation and information for the Form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification (valid Employment Authorization).

Various states have adopted policies and regulations to allow DACA, TPS, and ITIN* holders who meet all professional requirements to receive a professional license.

- Students who cannot apply for a professional license in their home state due to legislation can research and apply for their license in other states that provide professional licenses to individuals with an ITIN.**

*Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) - Individuals without a social security number may have an ITIN (Individual Tax Identification Number). ITINs, provided by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), are identifying numbers individuals with or without status can use to file taxes, get background checks, attain a professional license, and apply for credit cards or loans.

**Professional and Occupational Licenses for Immigrants <https://bit.ly/3AaGGas>

Funding

Undocumented students have difficulty navigating the financial aid system as they are not eligible for federal financial aid. Students also have difficulty navigating most loans regardless of the institution lending the funds, whether it be a school, bank, or credit union. PHD recommends that institutions create a task force and partnerships with sponsors or lending companies to prepare and create financial assistance available to all students entering their programs. We also ask that programs assess their institutional and private aid to determine if these funds can be made accessible to students with DACA, TPS, or without a social security number. Based on PHD's 2020 Survey: *Resources for Undocumented Students by Pre-medical Postbaccalaureate Institutions*, few programs provide undocumented students with need-based scholarships for books and tuition grants.

Campus staff is encouraged to inquire and host conversations with campus decision-makers to remove the US Citizenship requirement from institutional aid and scholarships. For example, US Citizenship requirements may prohibit non-citizens from applying for institutional assistance and scholarships even when funding does not come from the federal government but from the institution or private funders. In that case, we encourage schools to update institutional aid and scholarship requirements to be inclusive and establish additional non-federal funding at their campus to be accessible to all students regardless of their immigration status. An initiative of simply removing the US Citizenship or Permanent Resident Requirement from non-federal funds can create an equitable financial aid process for all students.

Postbaccalaureate Programs for Individuals with DACA, TPS, or non-SSN

Based on the AAMC tool*, an estimated 139 out of 298 postbaccalaureate programs accept applications from DACA recipients. However, the same information is unknown for individuals with TPS and without an SSN. Of those recorded programs, it is unclear if these campuses provided the guidance, support, and opportunities needed by students who are undocumented.

We recommend advisors to encourage students seeking to enroll in postbaccalaureate programs to research early to ensure they give themselves options and time to navigate complex situations. It is also beneficial to research current state policies** for professional licenses for DACA and TPS recipients, and individuals with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) to explore future career options.

Professional Licenses and Residency Programs for Individuals with DACA and TPS

Various states have adopted policies and regulations to allow individuals with DACA, TPS, and ITIN who meet all professional requirements to receive a professional license. Individuals with DACA and TPS have employment authorization and a social security number (SSN) and thus can apply to residency programs like any other student.

*AAMC Postbaccalaureate Premedical Programs <https://mec.aamc.org/postbac/#/index>

**Professional and Occupational Licenses for Immigrants <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/state-and-local/professional-and-occupational-licenses-immigrants>

Students without SSN who cannot apply for a professional license in their home state or institution due to legislation can research and apply for their license in other states that provide professional licenses to individuals with an ITIN. At least seven states provide professional licensure to individuals without an SSN who have an ITIN, including but not limited to California, New Mexico, and New Jersey³. Due to circumstances or immigration processes, some individuals may apply for a change in immigration status, opening their employment opportunities after graduation.

Residencies can be completed at hospitals, research labs, and other institutions. Residencies can be paid, and each site has its onboarding process. Some facilities may assume that students under DACA or TPS cannot complete their residency. Some states' policies may also create barriers for them. However, these individuals with DACA or TPS have a valid social security number and authorization to work.

2022 Policy Updates Regarding DACA and TPS*

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a federal executive branch initiative by former President Obama in June of 2012 for specific individuals who are undocumented and who came to the U.S. as children. DACA has afforded many individuals new opportunities by providing access to work authorization, a valid social security number, and a reprieve from deportation.

On September 5, 2017, the Trump Administration announced that it would terminate DACA by halting the review of initial applications and a wind down process for existing DACA recipients. Soon after the 2017 announcement, multiple lawsuits were filed across the country that challenged the Trump Administration's actions to terminate DACA. The current administration argued that DACA is an unlawful immigration policy signed by President Obama, who did not have the authority to create the program.

On June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court decided that the Trump administration's termination of DACA violated federal law. The renewable 2-year DACA program was reinstated to its initial benefits: deferred action from deportation, advance parole, and employment authorization. This employment authorization is not contingent on employer sponsorship.

However, as of August 2022, new applications for DACA and those with a previous grant of DACA that have lapsed for more than one year will not be approved. Pre-Health Dreamers, colleges, and universities have seen a rise in new students without DACA status. Regardless of setbacks, we have continuously seen progressive changes. We encourage advisors and programs to support students throughout their journey, including preparing them for future income-generating options (i.e., private practice, independent contracting, etc.).

*For up-to-date information on DACA, please visit the National Immigration Law Center <https://www.nilc.org/issues/daca/>

Temporary Protective Status (TPS)

“Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, is an immigration status that allows foreign nationals to remain in the U.S. if during the time they were in the U.S. something catastrophic happened in their country of origin, preventing their safe return – for example, war, famine, natural disaster, or epidemic. TPS allows people to work legally and be protected from deportation.”⁴

Many staff, administrators and faculty do not understand the complexity of TPS and often deny students the same admission access, advising, support and assistance that they do with DACA recipients. Less information and resources exist that guide educators in working with TPS recipients. We highly recommend that institutions work with TPS recipients as they would with DACA recipients due to similar procedural and processing steps that may occur when matriculating and ensuring resources for students under these categories.

Like DACA, students under TPS have faced uncertainty. TPS has been canceled and sometimes extended or reinstated in the last few years for individuals from specific countries such as Haiti, Guinea, and Sierra Leone⁴. Advocates continue to fight for individuals with TPS. Working with students to secure financial aid assistance and holistic counseling should also be a priority.

How do these announcements impact current DACA and TPS students?

Individuals with DACA and TPS continue to have access to all the benefits the program confers (access to a social security number, employment authorization document, and protected status in the U.S), allowing individuals to continue working and furthering their education. We strongly recommend that postbaccalaureate programs continue to consider applicants with DACA, TPS, and without SSN, as they would any other applicant, and help educate their staff and other stakeholders that the programs are still in effect.

Any uncertainties with DACA and TPS should not discourage programs from supporting their current and prospective students who are undocumented. Individuals have worked hard for many years and have overcome significant challenges to reach this point in their educational journeys, and they deserve the chance to continue their education.

Furthermore, regardless of the outcome of these immigration situations, recipients may have the opportunity to change their immigration status. According to a national study by Professor Tom Wong at the University of California, San Diego, an estimated 14.3 percent of DACA-eligible youth surveyed were eligible for another form of immigration relief, including eligibility for a U-Visa for survivors of certain crimes or eligibility for lawful permanent residence through a family-based visa petition.⁵ Over a dozen medical students with DACA have adjusted their immigration status while in medical school in the past five years. Based on this data, we can ensure that some students in postbaccalaureate programs with DACA and TPS and without SSN can also have the same outcomes in the coming years regarding their status.

In addition, advocates continue to lobby for a pathway to US residency for these individuals. An overwhelming majority of Americans support protecting and granting a change in status for undocumented youth.⁵ The Dream Act or other immigration legislation could permanently protect these individuals in the future.

Summary of Support Geared Toward Students with DACA, TPS, and without SSN:

- Pre-Health Dreamers and partners are researching and advocating for several professional programs to create accessibility for students with different immigration situations.
- The medical community has been actively supporting undocumented students with DACA. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) led an amicus brief, collaborating with other health professions groups, supporting the DACA litigation before the Supreme Court.
- Postbaccalaureate students have been offered assistance, but many are only in the low thousands of dollars despite high tuition fees. This is an opportunity for programs to provide institutional aid or institutional loans.
- Institutions are encouraged to establish generous financial aid and holistic support for students, and connect with funders who can help provide generous scholarships for students who do not qualify for federal, state, or institutional aid due to their immigration status.
- We encourage schools to omit language that indicates a student's undocumented status in their data systems. Schools are encouraged to use coding that keeps students' undocumented status confidential (e.g Resident for campus purposes only, citizenship undetermined, etc.)
- Departments should take extra steps to hire individuals with a strong background in working with immigrant and undocumented communities. Thorough and frequent training of staff that oversees and works with undocumented students and their lived experience should be done with intention. High awareness and sensitivity of undocumented students' needs should be required for staff working with this population.
- Advisors, decision-makers, and postbaccalaureate program staff are encouraged to get informed on income-generating options for graduates without social security, such as through entrepreneurship or independent contracts.
- Create an Undocumented Student Taskforce to assess and create the resources necessary for undocumented students, including financial aid.
- Assess institutional resources, use the [Pre-Health Dreamers' 2020-2021 Developing an UndocuSupport System: Enrichment Assessment of Campus Support for Undocumented Students*](#).

*Pre-Health Dreamers' 2020-2021 Developing an UndocuSupport System: Enrichment Assessment of Campus Support for Undocumented Student <https://bit.ly/3QNHA3H>

Last word

While an estimated 10.5 million undocumented immigrants reside in the U.S., we have witnessed the lack of training and hands-on resources for trainees and current healthcare professionals to serve their undocumented patients adequately. The lack of equitable healthcare access and care for undocumented and immigrant community members can be enhanced by individuals who are empathetic to the vulnerable situations and unique needs of these communities.

We believe future health professionals from undocumented and immigrant backgrounds have invaluable experiences caring for this diverse immigrant and underserved population. Immigrant students often lead advocacy efforts around healthcare access for undocumented and immigrant patients and identify health coverage resources for undocumented individuals, individuals like their families. Undocumented students can become knowledgeable healthcare professionals that will better serve and connect with the communities from which they come.

By providing support and advocacy for qualified undocumented individuals pursuing careers in the health professions, you can help close the gap in holistic support for these individuals within higher education institutions. Through postbaccalaureate academic support, guidance, and networking opportunities, you can help equip undocumented students for success in health professional programs.

Continuing to open doors for undocumented students will make for a more equitable health care system and culturally aware professional world.

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**PRE-HEALTH
DREAMERS**

Pre-Health Dreamers (PHD) promotes equitable education and healthcare access, opportunities, and resources for undocumented individuals and all immigrant communities. For more information visit: phdreamers.org.

Appendix:

University of California System

<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/statement-uc-president-janet-napolitano-filing-supreme-court-brief-daca>

American Council on Education (letter includes 600 university leaders)

Link: <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Institutional-DACA-Letter-to-Congress.pdf>

One Way Maryland Can Better Support Undocumented Students in Higher Education

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/md-support-undocumented-students-in-highered/>

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Yale Law and Yale School of Medicine NYT Op-Ed

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/opinion/trump-coronavirus-daca.html>

US Companies Supporting DACA Recipients

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/04/major-companies-tell-supreme-court-ending-daca-will-hurt-the-economy.html>

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Investing in Collective Health and Well-Being
<https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/State-and-Local-Immigrant-Rights-Developments-2020-09.pdf>
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