

# ANNUAL REPORT



## 2025



## PHD

PRE-HEALTH DREAMERS





# PHD PRE-HEALTH DREAMERS

## OUR MISSION

Pre-Health Dreamers (PHD) was founded in 2012 by a group of undocumented youth in California who dreamed of becoming healthcare professionals but encountered systemic barriers and a lack of support within higher education.

Today, PHD serves undocumented students across the country, with half of its participants and partnerships located in California—particularly in Los Angeles County and the Bay Area.

Through targeted programming, community connection, and training, PHD equips students with tools that supports them in their pursuit of medicine, nursing, dentistry, research, and more. PHD also works with colleges and universities to train staff and administrators, driving institutional change around admissions, financial aid, and student support.

PHD is creating pathways for the next generation of undocumented leaders in healthcare. Our community and partners' collaboration, funding and thrive fuel our work to break down barriers, expand access, and build a more inclusive and equitable future in the health professions.

**UndocuScholars, LLC. Awarded Pre-Health Dreamers with a 1645 Equity Architect Award**  
**This honor celebrates organizations and individuals who have made transformative contributions to equity, access, and systemic change for undocumented students.**

**Pre-Health Dreamers has been a trailblazer in advocating for the needs of undocumented students pursuing careers in health and science, including nursing programs at CA Community Colleges. Their tireless work aligns with the inclusive vision of California Assembly Bill 1645, which calls for greater support and resources for undocumented students in higher education.**

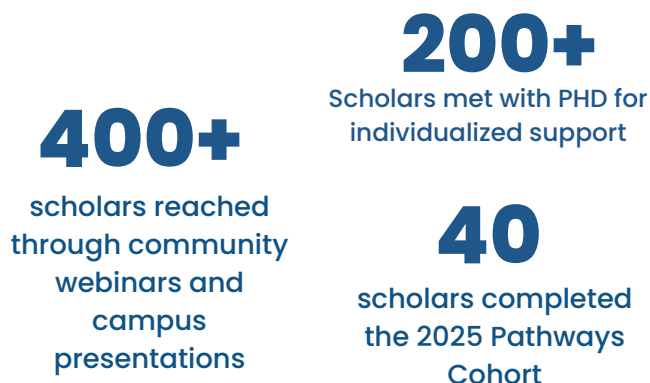


# ANNUAL COHORT PROGRAMMING

## PATHWAYS FOR SCHOLARS

Pathways supports undocumented students nationwide with cohort-style and personalized, one-on-one advising with our PHD team, focusing on academic planning, career exploration, professional development, advocacy support and training, and community building. PHD's support helps advance undocumented scholars into health-related programs and careers regardless of the obstacles they face.

## ANNUAL IMPACT SNAPSHOT



## LAUNCHPAD FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Launchpad is a professional development initiative that equips scholars with the tools and knowledge to venture into entrepreneurship in health care when traditional employment is not an option. PHD's Launchpad places a special focus on supporting undocumented students who face barriers in using their health-related degrees and licensure, due to their immigration status. Launchpad also provides training for advisors who seek to guide undocumented students who wish to work in healthcare and support their communities, yet lack immigration status or employment authorization.

**73**  
Scholars, educators and professionals completed PHD's entrepreneurship cohorts.



**100+**  
Scholars, educators and professionals reached during our 2024 webinar "Fostering an Entrepreneurship Mindset"

## UNDOCUEDU FOR EDUCATORS

UndocuEdu is a professional development program that builds competence and advising skills for individuals working with undocumented students. UED is designed for educators, staff, advisors, and administrators at universities and colleges, providing campus-specific training based on assessments completed in collaboration with the institution's teams. Through guided goal setting and collaboration, we raise awareness and help advance efforts that remove barriers to admission, financial aid, in-house processes, and holistic advising, ultimately increasing admissions, retention, and graduation rates for undocumented students.

**1,000<sup>↑</sup>**  
educators reached via campus trainings and online educators specific workshops.



# BECOMING A NURSE WHILE UNDOCUMENTED? IT CAN BE DONE!

## NURSING CONNECT: EXPANDING PATHWAYS FOR UNDOCUMENTED NURSES

PHD's pilot community group **Nursing Connect** launched in April 2025 and was designed to support undocumented individuals in the nursing field—both current practitioners and students—who are asking, “How can I work and use my nursing license without employment authorization?” The program fosters a supportive and solutions-focused community where participants can:

- Connect with peers facing similar challenges in the healthcare field;
- Explore questions related to contracting, entrepreneurship, and non-traditional ways to use their nursing degrees.
- Research legal, business, and educational pathways to help navigate and overcome systemic barriers.

Nursing Connect is working with 29 current and aspiring nurses as they begin building healthcare ventures and reimagining career possibilities beyond conventional employment routes.

## PHD WILL CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE TO ENSURE MORE DOORS OPEN FOR ALL FUTURE NURSES



### Q&A: Undocumented Nursing Students in California

This document focuses on California policies. Pre-Health Dreamers (PHD) encourages individuals from other states to use it as a foundation for research and advocacy within their regions.

The information below regarding Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) and background checks can be implemented in any state. However, policies supporting undocumented students and professionals vary; some states or programs may impose additional barriers.

#### Can undocumented students enroll in a nursing program in California without a Social Security Number (SSN) or immigration status?

Yes, it is possible. In California, legislation prevents higher education institutions, including nursing programs, from denying admission to students based solely on their immigration status. [California Education Code § 66270](#) protects individuals under the following immigration categories, and others, from discrimination when applying to California nursing programs:

- Undocumented individuals without employment authorization or an SSN
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders
- Individuals with pending asylum cases, U-Visas, T-Visas, or other “in-between” statuses
- Students with T or U visas

While immigration status does not preclude admission, students must still meet all standard admission requirements, such as completing prerequisite courses, meeting GPA thresholds, and passing entrance exams.

#### What barriers do students face without a Social Security Number (SSN)?

Although nursing programs cannot deny admission based on immigration status, undocumented students may face challenges in completing clinical requirements if they lack an SSN.

To provide nursing students with clinical experience, nursing programs must form partnerships with hospitals and clinics facilitating clinical rotations. However, clinical sites set the onboarding requirements that students must meet, and sometimes, that requirement is to have an SSN, creating obstacles for some undocumented students.

Some clinical sites, however, will accept an **Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)** in place of an SSN. [Click here](#) to learn more about ITINs and nursing programs or visit [phdreamers.org/resource-nursing](#)

#### Additional challenges include:

- Nursing programs may not know how to advocate for undocumented students when hospitals refuse to onboard them due to a lack of an SSN.
- Fear of losing partnerships. This fear prevents nursing programs from advocating on behalf of undocumented students.
- Lack of awareness of alternative identification methods, such as using a student identification number for onboarding.

#### What students can do:

- Ask nursing programs about their clinical partners and whether an SSN is required.
- Inquire if the program will help educate and advocate for students who lack an SSN.
- Seek alternative clinical placements within the program's network of contracted hospitals.
- Educate programs about ITINs and alternative onboarding options to support undocumented students.

To improve student access, nursing programs should proactively develop partnerships with clinical sites that welcome undocumented students and use alternative identification methods for onboarding.



### Undocumented Students Pursuing Nursing: What is an ITIN?

Undocumented students often face significant barriers when applying to or completing nursing programs. Misconceptions about their ability to pass a background check, complete clinical experience, and obtain professional licensure, especially if they do not have a Social Security Number (SSN), can be particularly challenging.

In many scenarios, an Individualized Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) serves as a key solution, helping to fulfill or complete some of the requirements that undocumented students may struggle with due to the lack of a Social Security Number (SSN).

PHD document guides nursing programs in supporting undocumented students in obtaining and utilizing ITINs effectively to complete their nursing program and receive their professional licensure.

It is imperative that nursing programs recognize the challenges that undocumented students face and actively support them in obtaining or maintaining a valid ITIN. This is crucial when implementing processes to help enroll and graduate undocumented students in nursing programs.

#### What is an ITIN?

An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is an identification number used for tax purposes and issued by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It is assigned to individuals who do not qualify for a Social Security Number (SSN). ITINs are used for tax purposes and ensure that individuals comply with tax laws, regardless of their immigration status (Source: [nilec.org/resources/itinfaq](#))

#### ITINs and Clinical Rotations

Many health professional programs require students to complete clinical rotations as part of their graduation requirements. In these cases, some clinical sites may accept an ITIN as an alternative to an SSN for onboarding students, while others require an SSN. Having an ITIN can minimize obstacles for undocumented students when completing their clinical rotations.

Some states, such as California, have laws like [SB 1129](#) that prohibit clinical sites from discriminating against undocumented students from “healing arts programs.” Verifying if your state has similar laws can be helpful when advocating for your student.

Nursing programs should proactively verify whether their clinical partners accept ITINs and communicate this information to students early as they are admitted to the nursing program.

#### ITINs and Background Checks

Some background check companies accept ITINs instead of SSNs or may provide a number “placeholder.” However, students may be required to provide biometric metrics (ex. fingerprints) as part of the process.

Undocumented students should consult an immigration attorney before undergoing a background check. Background checks can reveal information about potential immigration implications, and professional guidance can help students navigate this process safely.

#### Professional Licensure and ITINs

Some states, including CA, have passed legislation allowing undocumented individuals to apply for professional licensure using an ITIN. This enables undocumented students to register for and sit for exams like the NCLEX in those states.

**Important Step:** Regularly check for updates to state licensure policies to ensure students have access to the most accurate and current information. [Click here](#) for a list of states and policies supporting licensure for undocumented students, or visit [phdreamers.org/licensure](#).



# PHD HAS DEVELOPED MORE ACCESSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS:

In 2025, PHD initiated a series of Q&A and webinar sessions designed to support educators and students through the rampant changes and attacks on DEI and undocumented students across CA and the US. Through these efforts, we have reached over **344 educators and students**, fostering clarity and understanding of the problematic questions and obstacles students face when pursuing healthcare careers while undocumented.

- Supporting the Dream: A webinar for educators guiding undocumented students in health fields. (January)
- PHD Q & A Session (February)
- PHD Q & A Session (April)
- PhD Q & A Session (June)
- Health Careers 101 (July)



# PHD 2025 - 2026 GOALS

**PHD'S WORK REIMAGINES WHAT IT MEANS TO BELONG IN MEDICAL PROGRAMS AND HEALTH CARE, ADVANCING A BOLD VISION OF JUSTICE WHERE THE UNDOCUMENTED IDENTITY IS RECOGNIZED AS A SOURCE OF POWER—NOT A LIMITATION.**

PHD scholars have been losing access to protections like DACA and TPS, leaving many without legal status, work authorization, or a Social Security number. In 2017, approximately 80% of our scholars had DACA; by 2024, that number flipped—now 80% lack any form of immigration relief. Institutions across CA and nationwide have also seen this trend. They are working with and trying to guide more undocumented students who lack access to a wide range of opportunities, including licensure, financial aid, graduate and professional education, and employment.

Following the 2017 rescission of DACA, ongoing legal threats to DACA and TPS have limited access to clinical placements, internships, and early-career jobs—vital steps in the healthcare pipeline—which are increasingly restricted.

## **PHD's rapid response and goal setting to tackle current issues include:**

- Expanding our national online presence through high-impact Q&A events and webinars for students and educators
- Providing in-person support at CSU, UC, and community college campuses with large undocumented student populations across California and other states.
- Launching a new cohort of the LaunchPad entrepreneurship program for both educators and students.
- Welcoming a new cohort into PHD's graduate pipeline program, Pathways
- Providing individualized, one-on-one appointments to support students nationwide with career advising, career exploration, and financial aid guidance
- Joining coalition-building efforts with existing partners and expanding collaborations statewide and nationally
- Launching an Alumni Network to deepen connections and engagement with our growing alumni community
- Launching and UndocuEDU 6-week boot camp exclusively for educators, providing training and resource

