

Questions and Answers

Financial Aid and Undocumented Students

The questions and answers that follow provide information about student financial aid for undocumented students (sometimes referred to as "Dreamers") as well as guidance for a specific subgroup of undocumented students who have received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We have grouped the questions and answers into three categories: General Information, Eligibility for Financial Aid, and Completing the FAFSA.

A. General Information

1. Who are undocumented students?

Undocumented students are students who are not U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or "eligible noncitizens."

Undocumented students are sometimes referred to as "Dreamers." This term generally refers to undocumented youths who have lived in the United States from a very young age. The term "Dreamers" is derived from the legislation introduced in Congress and known as the "DREAM Act." You can read more about the proposed "DREAM Act" at www.ed.gov/news/speeches/dream-act-testimony.

Within the larger group of undocumented students, there is a subgroup of students who have received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

2. What is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)?

DACA is the name used of a process announced by the Secretary of Homeland Security on June 15, 2012. Under this process, if you came to the United States as a child and meet several key guidelines, you may contact U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a component of the Department of Homeland Security, to request consideration of deferred action. "Deferred action" refers to a decision to defer (delay or put off) removal action of an individual. DACA may be granted by USCIS for a period of two years and may be renewed under certain circumstances. Deferred action does not provide an individual with lawful status; however, recipients of deferred action may obtain work authorization.

General information about DACA: www.uscis.gov/childhoodarrivals

Answers to a series of frequently asked questions related to DACA, filing requirements, evidence, decisions, and renewals: www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions

3. Who is a DACA student?

A DACA student has received deferred action under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals process. Most DACA students are also granted work authorization; and if a student has work authorization, the student may be eligible to obtain a Social Security number. (More information about obtaining a Social Security number is in Question C.1.)

Thus, if a DACA student is granted deferred action **and** employment authorization, the student may be eligible for a Social Security number. For more information about obtaining a Social Security number, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/deferred_action.pdf.

B. Eligibility for Financial Aid

1. As an undocumented student or DACA student, am I eligible for federal student aid?

No. Undocumented students, including DACA students and Dreamers, are not eligible for federal student aid. However, you may be eligible for state or college financial aid. Most states and colleges use information collected on the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSASM) to determine whether you are eligible for aid. If you have a Social Security number, you may complete the FAFSA, and we encourage you to do so at www.fafsa.gov. However, we first recommend that you check with your high school counselor or your college or career school financial aid office to see what types of financial aid you may be eligible to receive and whether completing the FAFSA is the way to apply for that aid.

2. As an undocumented student or DACA student, am I eligible for in-state tuition?

It depends. In some states, undocumented students, or specifically DACA students, are eligible to receive in-state tuition. Please check with your high school or your college or career school financial aid office.

C. Completing the FAFSA

1. To complete the FAFSA, do I need a Social Security number?

Yes. A Social Security number is necessary to complete the FAFSA. If you are completing a FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov, a Social Security number is also required to apply for a personal identification number called a PIN, which can be used to electronically sign the FAFSA.

Most undocumented students are not eligible for a Social Security number; thus, they cannot complete the FAFSA. However, DACA students with Social Security numbers can complete the FAFSA. Still, even if you have a Social Security number, you should check with your high school counselor or your college or career school financial aid office to see whether completing the FAFSA is the way to apply for state and college aid.

Note: The remainder of the questions and answers in this document focus on completing the FAFSA, so the guidance applies only to DACA students with Social Security numbers—not to all undocumented students.

2. Does my parents' citizenship status affect my eligibility for federal student aid?

No. Your parents' citizenship status does not affect your eligibility for federal student aid. In fact, the FAFSA doesn't even ask about your parents' status.

3. In order for me to complete the FAFSA, do my parents need Social Security numbers?

No; since your parents' citizenship does not affect your ability to complete the FAFSA, they do not need Social Security numbers. If your parents do not have Social Security numbers, you must enter 000-00-0000 when the FAFSA asks for parents' Social Security numbers.

If your parents do not have Social Security numbers, you must print out the signature page from the online FAFSA so that your parents can sign it and send it in.

4. On the FAFSA, how do I answer the question that reads, "Are you a U.S. citizen?"

DACA students must answer that question by selecting the option "No, I am not a citizen or eligible noncitizen."

5. On the FAFSA, how do I answer the question that reads, "What is your state of legal residence?"

The state of legal residence is your true, fixed, and permanent home. The fact that you are a DACA student does not affect how you should answer this question for purposes of completing the FAFSA. Note that each state determines legal residency differently. You should contact your high school counselor or college or career school financial aid office for assistance with state of legal residence qualifications.

6. On the FAFSA, how do I answer the question that reads, "What is your parents' state of legal residence?"

Your parents' answer should reflect their true, fixed, and permanent home. Your parents' legal immigration status does not affect how you should answer this question for purposes of completing the FAFSA. Again, each state determines legal residency differently, and you should contact your high school counselor or college or career school financial aid office for more assistance.

7. On the FAFSA, how do I submit my tax information?

If you are completing the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov and you filed your income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), you may be able to access the information through the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. If you did not file an income tax return with the IRS, enter the requested financial information manually on the FAFSA website. If completing the paper FAFSA, follow the instructions that detail how to answer the financial information questions.

8. On the FAFSA, how do my parents submit their tax information?

If you are completing the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov and your parents filed their income tax returns with the IRS and they meet certain requirements such as having Social Security numbers, they may be able to access their tax information through the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. If your parents did not file their income tax returns with the IRS, you can enter the requested information manually on the FAFSA website. If completing the paper FAFSA, follow the instructions that detail how to answer the parental financial information questions.

Find more information about federal student aid and the FAFSA at StudentAid.gov.

Federal Student Aid
An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

PROUD SPONSOR of
the AMERICAN MIND™

May 2014