

# Increasing Awareness for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients on Their Path to Licensure

Katherine Watkins and Caroline Kokolus  
Drexel University College of Nursing and Health Professions

## Abstract

- The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy is one that has given more than half a million individuals the opportunity to begin a journey for themselves.
- The nursing profession is predominantly white, with only 19% of registered nurses representing a minority (Richardson & Welch, 2022). Allowing DACA recipients to practice in all states will help to diversify the nursing population.
- Currently, there are only 6 states that allow DACA recipients to receive licensure and practice, given they meet all the requirements. Additionally, there are 2 states that completely prohibit recipients from practicing. Then the majority have either more requirements to practice or leave it up to the entities to determine eligibility to practice.
- With a projected need for 275,000 additional nurses in the next 10 years, it is crucial that we allow the hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients to be licensed and able to practice without the complicated legal barriers because of their status as Dreamers (Haddad et al., 2023).

## Introduction

- Under DACA certain people who came into the United States as children and meet several key guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for 2 years (Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), 2024).
- DACA recipients can continually renew for 2 more years as well as apply and, if approved, are eligible for work authorization (Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), 2024).

## Conclusion

- Studies show that the American population will be at its most diverse point ever within the next 30 years (Vespa, et al., 2020)
- Despite the diversity of the population of America, the nursing profession remains predominantly white, with only 19 percent of registered nurses representing a minority (Smiley, et al., 2018).
- In the United States there is a shortage of nurses by about 3 million nurses. This shortage threatens patient safety and the efficacy of our healthcare system (Tamata, 2022).
- There are over 570,000 active DACA recipients, approximately 88,000 of whom are current or potential nurses that would make up over 30% of the projected nursing shortage (Active DACA recipients, 2023). DACA nurses will help save our populations, not harm them.
- There are also about 8,022 currently enrolled undocumented students in higher education in the state of Pennsylvania with 882 of those being DACA eligible students (Higher Ed, 2023).
- Around 7.7% of nurses are first-generation immigrants in Pennsylvania which equates to about 11,100 nurses being first-generation (Higher Ed, 2023).

## Recommendations

- DACA grants immigrants the opportunity to obtain a license without fear. Ways we can advocate for this population include creating safe spaces for recipients to share their stories and situations, as well as finding and publishing resources such as scholarships, financial assistance programs, and legal resources to help these individuals. It would be pertinent to contact our local government to help advocate and increase awareness for DACA recipients.
- Additionally, we can increase awareness and understanding through creating a community of recipients and supporters. This would establish a network of individuals to increase the outreach politically, in a work environment, and on a personal level.
- Drexel and CNHP should opt to provide more online resources that would help support DACA students' wanting to attend university, gain employment, and help them with life after college.

### Information for DACA and Undocumented Students

The University of Pennsylvania benefits greatly from the rich diversity of all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. As part of that commitment to inclusion, Penn provides access and support to undocumented students, including those with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) status.



#### Life After College – Guide for Undocumented Students

This guide, published by Immigrants Rising, covers topics such as considering graduate schools, what types of internships and work options are available, and how to navigate the applications and forms associated with these processes.



#### Alternatives to Employment

For undocumented students, there are several options for income-generating alternatives to traditional forms of employment.



#### Sources of Funding

There are various DREAMer-eligible & focused funding resources to assist with costs associated for internship, graduate school and other funding to support professional development ventures.



#### How to Fill Out Applications

Answering job or internship questions can be difficult. Here is a list of common questions that can legally be asked and what cannot by employers.



#### Disclosing Your Status to Employers

It can be both confusing and stressful to decide when (and if) to disclose your immigration status to a potential employer. Understanding your employment rights is a critical first step. Additionally, while it is important throughout any job or internship process to provide information that is accurate and factual, the decision about when, if and to whom to disclose your status is entirely yours. Here is one immigrant's take and advice on how, why and when to share your immigration status during an interview.



#### DREAMer Friendly Employers

Check out our list of employers, who indicated as part of a recruitment survey conducted in 2015 by Penn and UCLA, and updated in 2019, that they were specifically interested in hiring DACA students. The list is broken down by industry. In addition, these are companies who are considered DACA-friendly.

## References

Higher Ed Immigration Portal. (2023, December 14). *U.S. State Policies on DACA & Undocumented Students: Higher Ed Immigration Portal*. Presidents' Alliance. <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/states/>

Kaplan, Z. (2024, March 15). *Information for DACA and Undocumented Students*. Career Services | University of Pennsylvania. <https://careerservices.upenn.edu/channels/daca-and-undocumented-students/>

Pimienta, M., Morse, A., & Walsh, S. (2020). Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: Federal policy and examples of state actions. National Conference of State Legislatures. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/deferred-action.aspx>

Richardson, D. C., & Welch, S. (2022). The lived experience of DACA recipients who are US nursing program graduates and their pathways to professional licensure: A phenomenological study. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 43(6), 351–356. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.nep.0000000000000983>

Smiley, R. A., Lauer, P., Bienemy, C., Berg, J. G., Shireman, E., Reneau, K. A., & Alexander, M. (2018). Supplement: The 2017 national nursing workforce survey. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 9(Suppl), S1-S88. 10.1016/S2155-8256(18)30131-5

Tamata, A. T., & Mohammadnezhad, M. (2022). A systematic review study on the factors affecting shortage of nursing workforce in the Hospitals. *Nursing Open*, 10(3), 1247–1257. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop.2.1434>

U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services. (2022, November 3). *DHS begins limited implementation of DACA under final rule*. USCIS. <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/dhs-begins-limited-implementation-of-daca-under-final-rule>

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2023, September 18). *Consideration of deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA)*. USCIS. <https://www.uscis.gov/DACA>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2024, April 1). Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). USCIS. [https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-of-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca/frequently-asked-questions#what\\_is\\_deferred\\_action](https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-of-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca/frequently-asked-questions#what_is_deferred_action)

Vespa, J., Medina, L., & Armstrong, D. M. (2020). Demographic turning points for the United States: Population projections for 2020 to 2060. US Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf>

## Acknowledgements

- We would like to acknowledge the assistance from both the Drexel Student Nurse's Association (DUSNA), the Student Nurse's Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP) and most importantly our faculty advisor, Dr. Catherine Quay, EdD, RN, GERO-BC, CNE.

