

# LESSONS FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL

## DACA's IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING SUCCESS



By Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, and Angelo Mathay

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## Executive Summary

Immigration is arguably more intertwined with the education and training fields today than at any other time in recent U.S. history. The barriers to legal status and postsecondary education that unauthorized immigrant youth face have earned a special place in national and state policy debates as a result of the advocacy of youth who have come to be known as DREAMers. These youth present a unique dilemma for policymakers and target for legislative action since their lack of legal status results from the actions of their parents, not themselves. They also are a population of special concern for administrators in the education and training fields, in light of broader initiatives to improve postsecondary degree attainment and add new skills and vitality to local workforces.

First introduced in Congress in 2001 with bipartisan support, the *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act* (DREAM Act) sought to create a path to legal permanent residency and citizenship for these unauthorized immigrant youth—one that would be conditioned on completing high school and at least two years of college in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

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While repeated efforts in subsequent years to pass the DREAM Act have fallen short, the connection between educational attainment and immigration relief was solidified by the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in 2012. The program, which requires applicants to have a high school diploma or be enrolled in school or a qualifying adult education or training program,<sup>2</sup> was expanded on November 20, 2014 by President Obama as part of a larger package of executive actions on immigration.<sup>3</sup> The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that approximately 2.1 million individuals were potentially eligible for DACA under the program rules announced in 2012;<sup>4</sup> recent changes to the program design announced by the president could increase this number by several

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1 The *Development, Relief, And Education for Alien Minors Act* (DREAM Act), first introduced in 2001, required completion of a college degree or at least two years of postsecondary education toward a bachelor's degree as a condition for legal permanent status. Subsequent versions of the DREAM Act allowed applicants to substitute two years of military service for the postsecondary education requirement.

2 Qualifying programs include those leading to a high school diploma or its equivalent, as well as programs that have "a purpose of improving literacy, mathematics, or English, or are designed to lead to placement in postsecondary education, job training, or employment." U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Frequently Asked Questions," accessed November 19, 2014, [www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions#education](http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions#education).

3 Expansions to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program include: removing the maximum age ceiling that previously limited eligibility to those who were under age 31 as of 2012, changing the date of entry requirement from June 15, 2007 to January 1, 2010, and extending the period of deferred action from two years to three years. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), "Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United States as Children and with Respect to Certain Individuals Whose Parents are U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents" (memorandum from Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson to USCIS Director León Rodríguez, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Acting Director Thomas S. Winkowski, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske, November 20, 2014), [www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14\\_1120\\_memo\\_deferred\\_action.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/14_1120_memo_deferred_action.pdf).

4 This estimate includes 1.2 million immediately eligible youth who met both age and educational criteria at the time of the DACA program launch in 2012, as well as another 426,000 potential beneficiaries who were eligible but for education, and 473,000 children who would be eligible in the future (those ages 14 and younger who could age into eligibility upon turning 15). See Jeanne Batalova, Sarah Hooker, and Randy Capps, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark: A National and State Profile of Youth Eligible and Applying for Deferred Action* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/daca-two-year-mark-national-and-state-profile-youth-eligible-and-applying-deferred-action](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/daca-two-year-mark-national-and-state-profile-youth-eligible-and-applying-deferred-action).



hundred thousand.<sup>5</sup>

The DACA program intersects with the education and career-training fields in several distinct ways. First, applicants rely on schools to furnish transcripts demonstrating that they meet the program’s education requirements. DACA has also carved out a special role for adult education programs, as they provide an opportunity for individuals who lack a high school diploma or its equivalent and have aged out of K-12 schools to qualify for DACA protections. After obtaining relief from deportation and temporary work authorization, DACA grantees also would benefit from education and career training that will prepare them for jobs paying a family-sustaining wage. Completing a college degree is especially important for this group, as possible future DREAM-type legislation could include a postsecondary education requirement. Finally, and perhaps less obviously, educational institutions have played a valuable role in DACA outreach efforts by hosting information sessions and application clinics, answering students’ questions about the program, and providing referrals to legal service providers.

Improving the educational outcomes and career preparation of DACA youth also has broad societal benefits, especially in light of the national imperative to improve college degree attainment and add new skills and vitality to an aging workforce. Policymakers and business leaders have launched recent campaigns to raise college completion rates and promote labor market competitiveness. In many regions of the country, the demographic reality is that the outcomes of these initiatives will depend on their inclusion of immigrants, both legal and unauthorized.

Given the DACA program’s unique position at the convergence of the immigration and education fields, MPI’s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy has sought to capture the ways in which local educational institutions, legal service providers, and youth advocates have responded to the first phase of DACA. Conducting extensive interviews with stakeholders in seven states with large immigrant populations—California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Texas—MPI has attempted to identify initiatives undertaken by educational institutions and other community stakeholders to support DACA youth’s education and training success, and examine the impact of deferred action on grantees’ academic and career pursuits.

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The report describes key challenges facing legal service providers and educators serving DACA youth, along with lessons gleaned from current efforts for promoting the success of DACA youth across the education and skills training pipeline.

#### **A. High Schools**

Schools are well positioned to reach a broad segment of the DACA population. Since they are frequently regarded as safe spaces in immigrant communities, schools can serve as brokers of basic information on DACA. The opportunity to qualify for DACA may also motivate youth to return to school: interviewees in several sites reported increases in the re-enrollment of former dropouts after the program’s

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<sup>5</sup> Following DACA’s expansion in November 2014, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimated that the immediately eligible population is now 1.5 million. MPI, “As Many as 3.7 Million Unauthorized Immigrants Could Get Relief from Deportation under Anticipated New Deferred Action Program,” (news release, November 20, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/news/mpi-many-37-million-unauthorized-immigrants-could-get-relief-deportation-under-anticipated-new](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/mpi-many-37-million-unauthorized-immigrants-could-get-relief-deportation-under-anticipated-new). The size of the group that is eligible but for education—and needs to enroll in an adult education, literacy, or career training program in order to satisfy DACA requirements—has also grown by several hundred thousand. As described throughout this report, efforts to improve the education and training success of DACA youth are relevant to the entire potentially eligible population.





announcement. To help DACA youth meet the broader goals of high school completion and college access, however, educators need to be aware of the particular barriers and fears affecting these students and their families, and be equipped with strategies for promoting their success.

## TAKEAWAYS:

***Schools can serve as trusted sources of information on DACA—though staff members do not always have the technical knowledge to play this role.*** MPI fieldwork uncovered few examples of district-wide professional development or information dissemination focused on DACA. Instead, expertise and partnerships with legal service providers typically vary school to school. In some school districts, including Palm Beach County (Florida), Gwinnett County (Georgia), and Montgomery County (Maryland), a dedicated cadre of counselors and support staff is charged with counseling English Language Learners (ELLs) and/or immigrant students, and these teams often serve as the primary point of contact for students seeking assistance regarding DACA. Still, many interviewees spoke of educators' remaining confusion regarding DACA's requirements and reluctance to discuss potentially sensitive issues regarding students' immigration status. Districtwide capacity-building efforts could help educators to navigate these issues while remaining within legal confines, and ensure that students receive accurate information and referrals.

***Counselors serving unauthorized immigrants also need expertise in local, state, and federal college access policies and scholarships available for this group.*** Unauthorized immigrant students sometimes become aware of their immigration status during the college planning process, and can be discouraged by the challenges they are likely to face in affording college or finding a job. These youth look to school counselors to guide them through the complex and frequently changing policies that affect their opportunities for postsecondary education. The Illinois DREAM Counselor Training is a citywide initiative to ensure counselors have the tools to work effectively with DACA youth. The Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Mayor's Office of New Americans have undertaken this notably comprehensive effort to train high school counselors on DACA as well as the nuances of Illinois' in-state tuition policy and scholarships for unauthorized immigrant students.

***Immigrant serving-organizations can augment or complement schools' efforts by highlighting successful role models and community resources, and helping unauthorized students and families navigate both DACA and the college planning process.*** In several sites, community organizations serve as valuable partners for school personnel seeking to support immigrant students and families. For example, Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC), which operates in the San Francisco Bay area, trains unauthorized immigrant college students to conduct school-based presentations on scholarships, financial aid, and immigration policy issues, while the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) focuses on meeting parents' needs for both immigration and college planning information. In addition to working directly with immigrant students and families, both E4FC and NYIC also seek to build the capacity of counselors and other educators to promote college-going for a larger number of DACA youth.

***Dropout prevention and recovery programs are important and sometimes underutilized strategies for supporting DACA youth with gaps in their education.*** DACA youth often face barriers to high school graduation, including limited English proficiency as well as competing work and family responsibilities. For some out-of-school youth, DACA has provided an incentive to re-enroll. These students may be prime candidates for dropout recovery programs that are designed to serve over-age, under-credited students. For example in Texas, a unique state law allows students to remain in high school up to age 26; many school districts have taken advantage of this policy to create alternative high schools with flexible scheduling and wraparound support services that can be helpful to unauthorized immigrant youth. Similarly, the New York City Department of Education's Pathways to Graduation program was also reported to be particularly relevant for many DACA youth, preparing students ages 17 to 21 to earn a high school equivalency diploma in English or Spanish. Nationwide, however, many districts lack appropriate options for older immigrant students, and DACA youth may encounter resistance when they try to re-



enroll in traditional high schools.

***Dual enrollment programs and other acceleration strategies have the potential to make college more affordable for DACA youth, though academically challenging eligibility requirements may limit their reach.*** Dual enrollment programs, which allow high school students to take college-level courses and earn both secondary and postsecondary credit, can be especially beneficial for DACA youth as college courses are typically provided tuition-free to dual enrollment participants. The City Colleges of Chicago explicitly advertises its dual enrollment courses as a resource available to unauthorized immigrant students, though students must meet eligibility requirements, including passing a college placement test. Other dual enrollment programs have a broader reach. For instance, the “early college high school” model in the Pharr San Juan-Alamo and Hidalgo Independent School Districts in South Texas aims to provide all students with an opportunity to earn college credits; to accommodate students with lower academic preparation or limited English proficiency, the districts provide supplemental instruction in the skills needed for success in college courses.

***The task facing educators is most challenging in states with more restrictive policies regarding college access for unauthorized immigrant youth.*** Barriers to higher education were reported to limit the aspirations of high school students in states such as Georgia, where DACA grantees are ineligible for dual enrollment programs, are barred from enrolling in the state’s most academically selective public institutions, and must pay out-of-state tuition rates at all other colleges. Effective counseling is reported to be a weak antidote in states with such strong structural barriers to postsecondary education and training.

## **B. Postsecondary Education**

If past DREAM Act proposals are to be the guide for future legislation that may offer a permanent legal remedy for unauthorized immigrant youth, then a two- or four-year college degree will be a critical prerequisite. While many unauthorized college students are talented and highly motivated, this group faces numerous barriers to college completion—the most pervasive of which is affordability. Unauthorized immigrants and DACA grantees are ineligible for federal financial aid or loans, though the last decade has seen a proliferation of state laws and policies designed to make college more affordable for this group. Some institutions have tackled a wider range of issues affecting college persistence by creating or adapting student support services for DACA youth and improving remedial instruction for ELLs. Overall, this report’s findings demonstrate that higher education opportunities for DACA youth continue to be driven largely by their state of residence, given the wide differences in college costs and state policies regarding tuition and financial aid for unauthorized students.

## **TAKEAWAYS:**

***In-state tuition laws have the potential to increase college-going and completion rates among DACA youth, but the terms of these policies vary substantially across states. Eligibility requirements may exclude students who have taken a nontraditional path to higher education, such as GED completers and older students.*** Interviewees reported that the enactment of in-state tuition laws led to notable increases in the number of courses taken per term by unauthorized students—suggesting that these laws can reduce the amount of time it takes students to accumulate credits and earn a degree. Still, some of the students facing the greatest barriers to college persistence may be unable to benefit: Florida’s recently enacted policy, for instance, leaves out students who earned a GED and those who did not apply for college within two years of high school graduation. Meanwhile, some of the longest-standing in-state tuition laws—including those of California, Illinois, New York, and Texas—have the widest reach as a result of their broad eligibility rules.

***Implementation challenges prevent supportive state policies from reaching their full potential.*** Unauthorized immigrant students who are eligible for in-state tuition or financial aid may have trouble accessing these benefits, due to lack of information and front-line administrative staff who are often





unfamiliar with policy details. Among our study states, Florida and Maryland had most recently passed in-state tuition legislation, and interviewees in these states spoke about the substantial learning curve—for institutions as well students and families—associated with implementation of these laws. Providing comprehensive staff training, workshops on the new policies for prospective students, and publishing relevant information via school websites have all proven helpful in improving implementation.

***Beyond in-state tuition, policies offering state financial aid, scholarships, loans, and other cost-saving measures for DACA youth represent significant steps toward leveling the playing field. However, few states have adopted policies permitting access to a full range of financial assistance programs.*** Five states nationwide extend eligibility for state financial aid to unauthorized immigrants meeting certain requirements.<sup>6</sup> This group includes California and Texas—the two states that also have the lowest overall community college tuition rates among the seven studied.

***Private funders and some public institutions have created tailored scholarship programs for DACA youth; however, demand usually outstrips supply.*** Colleges and private scholarship providers have taken a variety of approaches to supporting DACA youth. At some colleges, certain institutional scholarships are available to all students regardless of immigration status, though these opportunities may not be widely advertised. In other cases, privately funded scholarship programs have been created specifically for immigrants, including the Global Education Center scholarship at Palm Beach State College. Nationwide, the largest private scholarship program targeted to DACA grantees is “TheDream.US,” which covers the full cost of tuition and fees at partner colleges. While these scholarships have the potential to dramatically improve the educational trajectories of their recipients, processes for obtaining them are often highly competitive, with demand by DACA youth far exceeding the supply of financial support.

***Well-structured advising and social services play a key role in helping DACA youth navigate college administrative systems, develop a sense of belonging on campus, and progress along a college and career trajectory.*** Beyond affordability, DACA youth often struggle to balance work, family, and academic pressures, along with stressors related to their immigration status. Some of the California institutions included in this study have created campus resource centers and advising programs that specifically address the needs of unauthorized students. These centers host student workshops on DACA and the *California Dream Act*,<sup>7</sup> train faculty and administrative staff on the unique issues facing unauthorized students, provide career counseling and employment assistance, and offer a meeting space for student support groups. The University of California has taken the lead in financing such efforts: in 2013, President Janet Napolitano dedicated \$5 million in discretionary funds for social, academic, and financial resources for the approximately 900 unauthorized immigrant students on its campuses. Meanwhile, California State University and California Community Colleges enroll substantially higher numbers of unauthorized immigrants<sup>8</sup> but lack dedicated, systemwide funding to support their retention and success.

***Accelerated, content-based approaches to English remediation provide an important on-ramp to college-level work.*** Many colleges channel immigrant students with gaps in their academic English skills into a lengthy series of remedial courses when they enter college. Innovative efforts to reduce the time and cost of college-level English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, such as the City University of New York (CUNY) Language Immersion Program (CLIP), can help DACA youth make a quicker and

6 The other three states are Minnesota, New Mexico, and Washington. National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), “Undocumented Student Tuition: State Action,” June 12, 2014, [www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-state-action.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-state-action.aspx).

7 The *California Dream Act* refers to Assembly Bills (AB) 130 and 131, enacted in 2012, which allow certain unauthorized immigrant students to receive state financial aid and scholarships. *California Dream Act of 2011*, California AB 130, 2011 State Assembly (July 25, 2011), [www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt\\_frm/ab130.pdf](http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/ab130.pdf); *Donahoe Higher Education Act*, California AB 131, 2011 State Assembly (October 8, 2011), [www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt\\_frm/ab131.pdf](http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/ab131.pdf).

8 The number of unauthorized immigrant students awarded financial aid in 2014-15 through the *California Dream Act*, by type of postsecondary education institution, was: 3,801 in California Community Colleges (CCC); 2,925 in California State University, and 1,180 in the University of California. The actual number of unauthorized immigrant students is likely higher, especially in the CCC system, as many CCC students do not file financial aid applications. Alex Corey, “CSUs Lag Behind UCs in Creating ‘Dream Centers,’” *New America Media/El Nuevo Sol*, December 7, 2014, <http://newamericamedia.org/2014/12/csus-lag-behind-ucs-in-creating-dream-centers.php>.



smoother transition to postsecondary education. As colleges design ESL remediation programs and recruit students, they can make these courses accessible to DACA youth by taking into account factors such as cost, scheduling, child care, and other support or counseling services that may be necessary for students to succeed and earn at least a two-year degree.

### C. Adult Education

Since DACA's launch in 2012, potential beneficiaries have turned to free and low-cost ESL, adult basic education (ABE), and adult secondary education (ASE) courses to help them meet DACA's education requirements. Applicants have relied on these programs to provide them with letters of attendance that they can submit to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) with their applications. In some cases, local adult education systems have attempted to leverage the opportunity provided by DACA to propel students toward middle-skill jobs, offering innovative programs that are relevant to the DACA population. The report's findings suggest, however, that adult education programs' responses to DACA have been hindered by severe capacity constraints as well as a limited understanding, in some cases, of this field's role in DACA implementation.

Moreover, demand for adult education services could increase as a result of President Obama's announcement of new executive actions on immigration. While some potential DACA beneficiaries will also be eligible to obtain relief through the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program—which does not include an education requirement—there is a new group of older individuals who could qualify for DACA. As some of these adults have been out of school for many years, adult education programs will likely be relied upon to serve as a critical second-chance system for those among them who seek to fulfill DACA eligibility criteria.

### TAKEAWAYS:

***Municipal-level responses to DACA that bolster adult education services and connect these programs to immigration legal service providers and other community stakeholders have the potential to improve service navigation and access for lower-educated youth, and aid them in applying for DACA and advancing their education.*** The New York City DACA Initiative, launched with City Council funding in 2013, created a coordinated referral system linking adult education, legal services, and community outreach organizations. By dedicating \$8 million (out of the initiative's total \$18 million) to ESL and high school equivalency programs for potentially DACA-eligible individuals, New York brought the needs of lower-educated adults to the forefront of its DACA response and built the capacity to serve this population. Low-cost elements of this initiative appear replicable in other contexts.

***Spanish-language instruction has proven effective for many DACA youth with limited English proficiency—but such programs are in short supply, with federal funding restrictions limiting the provision of this high-demand service.*** For students with limited English proficiency and gaps in their education, completing ESL courses and then pursuing the academic courses needed to earn a GED or high school equivalency (HSE) diploma can be a multi-step, multi-year process. As an alternative, some programs prepare students to take the Spanish-language version of GED or HSE tests, often while providing ESL instruction. According to interviewees, these programs are popular among DACA youth in regions ranging from New York City to Atlanta—though seats can be hard to find, since federal adult education funding may not be used for Spanish-language instructional programs.<sup>9</sup>

***Strategies that aim to accelerate students' progress from adult education into college-level certificate and degree programs—including bridge programs and integrated education and skills training models—can offer a significant savings of time and money for DACA youth.*** Innovations in the adult education and training fields have the potential to launch DACA youth into postsecondary education,

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<sup>9</sup> *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* funds may not be used for adult secondary education (ASE) instruction in languages other than English. Some states also have policies that restrict the use of state funds for this purpose.



even though these reform efforts were designed for a broader population. For instance, bridge programs at the City Colleges of Chicago allow participants to take tuition-free college courses while also completing ESL or GED courses tailored to a specific career field. These programs can help DACA youth overcome the affordability hurdle as they make the transition from free, noncredit courses to college-level courses that charge full tuition. The City Colleges of Chicago promotes these programs on their “Undocumented Student Resources” webpage, clearly stating that DACA youth are eligible for full participation.

***Career-focused programs provide an important alternative to traditional adult education courses, and may have more success in engaging harder-to-reach members of the DACA population: those who are older and have significant gaps in their education. These programs can launch DACA grantees into higher-paying jobs.*** In California, Proteus, Inc. and Building Skills Partnership (BSP) have designed pilot programs based on this premise, with the goal of providing a pathway into career-training programs, funded under Title I of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), which lead to middle-skill jobs. Given that DACA recipients are eligible to receive WIOA career-training grants after they get employment authorization, the Proteus and BSP pilot programs seek to provide new pathways for individuals who enroll in GED or ESL instruction, apply for DACA, and then are placed in a training program in a field such as transportation or solar energy. The economic benefits of this strategy could be substantial, though these programs remain limited in scale.

***Capacity constraints in the adult education system continue to impede the participation of lower-educated adults seeking to apply for DACA.*** In many regions, ranging from Atlanta to Los Angeles and Fresno, DACA applicants have difficulty accessing free or low-cost adult education courses due to lengthy waiting lists; these enrollment backlogs can fuel demand for nonaccredited and sometimes fraudulent programs.

#### **D. Legal Services**

For many DACA youth, accessing legal information and advice is the first, essential step in their efforts to apply for DACA. The sheer number of DACA applications submitted during the program’s first two years—more than 680,000 by July 20, 2014<sup>10</sup>—would not have been possible without significant national and local efforts to expand and coordinate immigration-related legal services in response to DACA’s announcement. The scale of the legal services infrastructure varied somewhat across the sites included in this study. In cities with large DACA populations such as Los Angeles and Chicago, attorneys and nonprofit organizations launched volunteer-driven “mega workshops” or clinics in the months following DACA’s announcement, allowing them to process a high volume of applications. Immigrant-serving organizations with deep ties in their local communities were at the forefront of DACA application efforts, along with law school clinics and consulates. These groups undoubtedly will play a central role in the implementation of newly announced executive actions.

Given the overlapping roles and interests of legal service groups and educational institutions in supporting youth in applying for DACA and promoting their education and career success, MPI fieldwork explored the nature and extent of initiatives involving collaboration or coordination across these two fields. Though most such efforts were not created with the intent to promote long-term education and career advancement, their successes and challenges can inform future efforts.

#### **TAKEAWAYS:**

***Collaboration and coordination across legal service and education programs is essential to leverage the strengths of existing service infrastructures in local communities; however, the effectiveness of such efforts is often undercut by a lack of navigation assistance for adult education and training programs, which is necessary to match the needs and goals of adult learners to local programs***

<sup>10</sup> Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*.



***that can best serve them.*** Several regions studied have formed local DACA collaboratives or task forces that involved educational institutions as well as prominent legal service providers and immigrant youth-led organizations. In Los Angeles, for example, the DACA 100 Taskforce, convened with support from the California Community Foundation, has shifted efforts over the past year to focus primarily on school-based DACA outreach and workshops in the Los Angeles Unified School District. This approach aims to engage K-12 students as well as parents who may themselves be DACA-eligible. Similarly, the Central Valley DACA Collaborative draws on the participation of the Fresno Unified School District, Fresno Adult School, and other educational institutions. Nevertheless, these initiatives are generally unable to provide individualized guidance for DACA applicants on how to find a program that will not only qualify them for DACA, but also be a smart investment toward their education and career goals.

***Legal service entities and lawyers need assistance providing referrals to education and training programs for DACA applicants, along with other system navigation supports, since in most cases it is unrealistic to expect that attorneys will be able to effectively advise clients on how best to meet their adult education and training needs.*** Not surprisingly, the report's findings demonstrate that legal service providers are often unfamiliar with the various types of programs and policies governing access to adult education courses in their region; their ability to provide effective referrals to adult education and training programs is further complicated by the fact that the offerings of most local programs are uncoordinated, overenrolled, and difficult to navigate. Local intermediary organizations, along with education institutions, government agencies, and funders, could play a valuable role in creating accessible and up-to-date guides to adult education and training programs for students with various interests and profiles.

***Many schools and school districts would benefit from clearer guidance regarding the DACA program and their ability to share pertinent information about its provisions without running afoul of student privacy regulations. Trusted intermediaries can provide quality controls that education institutions may require as a condition of allowing access to school sites.*** Legal service providers in some regions reported challenges in partnering with local schools, due in part to security procedures as well as schools' hesitation to work with an unfamiliar organization or engage in the sensitive topic of students' immigration status. School districts may prefer to partner with intermediary organizations that can lend expertise and legitimacy to DACA outreach efforts. For instance, the DACA 100 Taskforce in Los Angeles, which had the support of the mayor's office and the California Community Foundation, paved the way for school-based DACA workshops. Support and guidance from relevant federal and state entities could also help local school and district administrators understand current immigration programs and access trustworthy sources of information.

## **E. Conclusion**

Fieldwork interviewees overwhelmingly reported that DACA has had a positive impact on the educational and career aspirations of recipients. The extent of DACA's impact on college enrollment and persistence, however, has depended on the availability of legal, academic, financial, and socioemotional support—all of which vary substantially across the country. Legal and administrative hurdles, affordability barriers, and lack of information and guidance limit educational opportunities for DACA youth. These challenges can be the hardest to overcome for older individuals and those with less formal education.

President Obama's recent announcement of expanded executive action has changed the dynamics of the national immigration debate, putting into play a new wave of federal program implementation efforts with significant local implications. As many cities and states seek to reap economic and social gains from bringing DACA youth into the formal labor market and building their human capital, the initiatives described in this report provide important lessons for achieving the twin goals of assisting youth who may qualify for new immigration relief measures while also promoting their education and career advancement.





## I. Introduction

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, announced by the Obama administration in June 2012, represented the first opportunity in several decades for a large group of unauthorized immigrants to obtain relief from deportation. This executive action singled out a population that was considered to be politically sympathetic—young adults who were brought to the United States before age 16—and offered them the opportunity to receive temporary protection and work authorization. The program’s benefits were initially designed to last for two years, and in June 2014, the earliest DACA grantees began applying for renewal. The DACA program was expanded on November 20, 2014, along with a broader set of executive actions on immigration announced by President Obama. The new regulations removed the program’s maximum age ceiling, changed the required date of entry into the United States from 2007 to 2010, and extended DACA’s period of relief from two to three years. Meanwhile, the newly created Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program, slated to begin in spring 2015, will offer similar protection to unauthorized immigrants who are parents of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, and who have lived in the United States for at least five years.

DACA is unique among immigration policies in its focus on educational attainment as a condition for eligibility. DACA applicants must have a high school diploma or its equivalent, or be enrolled in school, including K-12 education along with adult education, literacy, or career-training programs. While this level of education is lower than the threshold that would have been required for permanent relief under previous versions of the *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act* (DREAM Act)—a postsecondary degree or at least two years of college toward a bachelor’s degree—DACA’s education requirement nonetheless prove a high hurdle for hundreds of thousands of potential applicants who have not finished high school and are beyond the traditional high school age range.<sup>11</sup>

Since DACA’s original announcement, legal service providers, educational institutions, and immigrant-serving organizations have played a critical role in implementation. DACA youth have turned to immigration attorneys and trusted legal service providers to understand the program’s provisions, determine if they fall within them, and weigh the risks and benefits of applying for its protections. Applicants also rely on their current or former schools for transcripts and other documents proving that they meet the program’s eligibility and continuous residency requirements. In some cases, K-12 schools and colleges have been important actors in local efforts to disseminate information on DACA and assist eligible individuals with their applications. Adult education programs have been uniquely impacted, as they represent a pathway to DACA eligibility for individuals who lack a high school diploma or its equivalent.

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*DACA is unique among immigration policies in its focus on educational attainment as a condition for eligibility.*

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Implementation of the DACA program has also coincided with sweeping education policy reforms affecting all students. During the same period, the vast majority of states began using the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, which set a higher bar for the knowledge and skills that students should master in grades K-12 in order to graduate ready for college and careers in today’s economy. This effort to enhance the rigor of instruction and assessment also has affected the adult education system: the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) was revised in 2014 to align with the Common Core, and many states have adopted alternative, equally challenging high school equivalency tests. Policymakers have launched comprehensive national and state-level campaigns to raise college

<sup>11</sup> Ibid; Margie McHugh, *Diploma, Please: Promoting Educational Attainment for DACA- and Potential Dream Act-Eligible Youth* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/diploma-please-promoting-educational-attainment-daca-and-potential-dream-act-eligible-youth](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/diploma-please-promoting-educational-attainment-daca-and-potential-dream-act-eligible-youth).



completion rates, bringing a heightened focus on persistence and progress toward postsecondary degrees and certificates for all learners.

Depending on one’s vantage point, the fields of education and immigration policy can be equally complex and challenging to navigate—yet they are also interdependent. Education systems are motivated to remove barriers affecting students’ outcomes including, often, those related to immigration status. Meanwhile, legal service providers and advocates look to high schools, colleges, and adult education programs to help unauthorized immigrants qualify for DACA.

This report takes a deeper look at the ways in which local actors have responded to the opportunities and challenges provided by DACA during the program’s first two years, as well as the impacts of deferred action on recipients’ educational success. The analysis includes a focus on efforts to help eligible individuals learn about DACA and apply for the program, as well as promising practices that support their education and career training. The findings are based on fieldwork interviews with stakeholders—including educators and administrators in secondary, postsecondary, and adult education systems, as well as legal service providers, immigrant youth organizations, and, local government agencies—in seven states with large DACA-eligible populations (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Fieldwork Sites**

State	Cities/ Regions
California	Central Valley region Los Angeles
Florida	Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties
Georgia	Atlanta metropolitan area
Illinois	Chicago
Maryland	Montgomery and Prince George’s counties
New York	New York City
Texas	Austin, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Lower Rio Grande Valley region

The report is organized into sections focused on the roles of four primary types of institutions that stand to play a pivotal role in supporting DACA implementation as well as educational and career success: high schools, colleges, adult education providers, and legal service providers. The following sections examine innovative efforts taking place in institutions across the study sites, as well as enduring challenges affecting the outcomes of DACA youth. After each section, key takeaways are identified: lessons for improving the educational success of DACA youth and preparing them for more productive futures as well as the possible passage of immigration legislation that may include a postsecondary education requirement.





## II. High Schools

Elementary and secondary schools arguably have the most important role to play in advancing the educational success of DACA youth, since they are among the most significant and visible local institutions involved in the integration of immigrant children. Mandated to serve all children regardless of immigration status,<sup>12</sup> schools are generally viewed as trusted spaces and reputable sources of information and support. They are well positioned to reach several groups affected by DACA, including high school students who meet program requirements, children under age 15 who will age in to eligibility over the next several years, and parents of K-12 students who might themselves be eligible for deferred action. This section explores the ways in which local schools and districts are contributing to DACA implementation and also addressing the broader set of barriers to high school completion and college and career readiness commonly faced by unauthorized immigrant youth.

At a minimum, DACA applicants rely upon their school district to provide access to attendance and graduation records that demonstrate that they meet the program's education and residence requirements.<sup>13</sup> Many schools with large immigrant populations saw sharp increases in the number of document requests following DACA's implementation, and some expanded their administrative capacity or created new transcript request systems specifically to serve DACA applicants. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), for instance, implemented a centralized, online document request system in September 2012 to relieve the burden on local schools, some of which received hundreds of requests in DACA's first month. Individuals who fill out a DACA request form receive documentation of their enrollment and address history, as well as their high school transcript, free of charge. LAUSD has processed more than 15,000 requests through this system. In Miami-Dade Public Schools, individual schools are responsible for responding to records requests from current and former students, but the district's central office provides annual training for school registrars on the documents needed by DACA applicants. These districts and many others have taken important steps to make the process of accessing school records as easy and transparent as possible for both students and staff.

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*Elementary and secondary schools arguably have the most important role to play in advancing the educational success of DACA youth.*

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While these administrative efforts prove essential to DACA applicants, they do not, by themselves, address underlying barriers to school persistence and academic success. DACA youth face many of the same challenges as other at-risk groups: the majority live in low-income families and many are current or former English Language Learners (ELLs). However, they also confront a unique set of procedural barriers and deeply felt concerns regarding the impact of their immigration status on their prospects for college and career success. These challenges notwithstanding, DACA has expanded opportunities for many students, and interviewees report that it has brought a new sense of hope and raised college aspirations for many.

This section describes examples of local programs and state policies that aim to address academic and nonacademic barriers commonly affecting DACA youth at the high school level, improve their graduation rates, and ease the transition to postsecondary education and the workforce.

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12 *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, United States Supreme Court, 1982, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/457/202/#annotation>.

13 The recent DACA expansions announced by President Obama on November 20, 2014 changed the required date of entry from June 15, 2007 to January 1, 2010. DHS, "Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion."



## A. Promising Practices

### I. Dropout Prevention and Recovery; Graduation Options for Older Students

In virtually all states, graduation rates for Hispanic youth (who comprise the majority of the DACA-eligible population) lag significantly below those of their non-Hispanic white peers, with ELLs having even lower chances of graduating in four years. In New York State, for instance, less than one-third of ELLs graduated on time in 2013, compared with three-quarters of all students.<sup>14</sup> For some ELLs, there simply is not enough time in the tight high school schedule to master English, complete required academic courses, and pass challenging high school exit exams in four years. DACA youth are likely to be long-term ELLs, meaning that they have been in U.S. schools for six or more years, and often have strong conversational English skills, but lack the academic English proficiency needed for rigorous content. Many students become discouraged and drop out of school after falling off track for graduation. Others need to leave school to enter the workforce and contribute income to their families, or to care for relatives or their own children. Interviewees across all the study sites spoke to the complex balancing act performed by many DACA youth.

DACA can provide an incentive for youth to return to school in order to qualify, and interviewees in several districts noted an increase in the re-enrollment of former dropouts that they attribute to DACA. In some districts, dropout prevention and recovery programs that are designed to meet the needs of overage, under-credited students serve substantial numbers of unauthorized immigrants who may be DACA-eligible. While states establish their own policies on the maximum age of high school enrollment, most officially allow students to remain enrolled until their 21st birthday.<sup>15</sup> In practice, however, students who are unlikely to graduate by age 18 or 19 often have limited options for pursuing a high school diploma.

The New York City Department of Education's District 79 is comprised of alternative schools and programs for students up to age 21 who have experienced an interruption in their education. Youth receive assessments and information about their program options through referral centers located in each borough. The district's largest program, Pathways to Graduation, prepares youth to earn a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma while also providing life skills counseling and college and career coaching. Students also have the option of attending afternoon classes to obtain a Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Credential—a New York State-recognized certificate that serves as an indicator of job readiness to some employers.

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The Pathways to Graduation program is offered at approximately 70 sites, many of which are co-located with community-based organizations that provide wraparound support services. One-third of the 8,000 students served annually are ELLs, and interviewees estimate that approximately one-tenth are unauthorized immigrants or DACA grantees. All ELLs receive instruction from teachers who are trained and certified in ESL instruction, and some sites offer academic instruction in Spanish in order to prepare students to take the Spanish-language version of the HSE exam. All students can apply for the Pathways to Graduation internship program, regardless of their immigration status. Pathways students are also eligible for other critical support services provided for parenting students in District 79, including free

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14 New York State Education Department, Office of Information and Reporting Services, "Graduation Rate and Enrollment Outcomes by Student Subgroup," June 17, 2013, [www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20130617/home.html](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20130617/home.html).

15 In some states, including Florida, the maximum age of high school enrollment is decided at the district level. See National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), "Table 5.1. Compulsory school attendance laws, minimum and maximum age limits for required free education, by state: 2013," [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5\\_1.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_1.asp).



child care and subway transportation.

In Texas, a unique state law (House Bill 1137, passed in 2007<sup>16</sup>), allows K-12 school districts to receive funding for enrolling youth up to age 26, with the goal of increasing the opportunities for older students to earn a regular high school diploma. Critically, these extra years of high school eligibility allow young adults in their early 20s to stay enrolled, free of charge, in their local school system, instead of transitioning to adult education programs that may be harder to access and often are not well suited to their needs or interests. Many school districts have used this policy to create or expand targeted programs for older students, including DACA youth.

For example, Liberty High School<sup>17</sup> in Houston serves approximately 200 students who are missing credits required for graduation, with a specific focus on older immigrant youth and ELLs. Liberty's flexible schedule that accommodates students who have work and family responsibilities represents a particularly important program design feature. The school offers both day and night programs, six days a week,<sup>18</sup> and gives students the option to transfer back and forth between the day and night courses. Interviewees credit this flexibility with helping DACA youth avoid dropping out of school when their schedules change.

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*Many districts do not have dropout recovery programs that are tailored to meet the needs of immigrants and ELLs.*

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In Pharr San-Juan Alamo—a small school district in the Rio Grande Valley that is 99 percent Latino—the College, Career, and Technology Academy (CCTA) serves non-graduating seniors and former dropouts, including some who have returned to meet DACA requirements. The program allows students to complete missing credits and provides remediation for those who have failed a portion of the state high school exit exam. CCTA also incorporates dual enrollment courses that confer credit at South Texas College, and wraparound support services that include mentoring and child care.<sup>19</sup> CCTA has helped approximately 1,200 students earn a high school diploma since its inception in 2007, and has become a nationally recognized dropout recovery program.<sup>20</sup>

Many districts do not have dropout recovery programs that are tailored to meet the needs of immigrants and ELLs, however, and older youth may encounter barriers to enrolling in traditional high schools. Schools may be reluctant to serve this group for both programmatic and accountability-related reasons: students who are unlikely to graduate in four years, or who have fewer than four years left before they age out of high school, could negatively impact their graduation rates. In several districts, educators spoke of the challenge of accommodating students who are 17 or older but only have enough credits to be placed in the 9th grade—let alone immigrant teenagers who may have never attended school in the United States and have low levels of English proficiency. Former dropouts may also be frustrated by being told that they must attend a special program for older students rather than return to their neighborhood high school. In a few sites, counselors and immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations reported that they had intervened on behalf of unauthorized immigrant students who experienced resistance from school registration staff, even though they were legally entitled to attend high school.

16 Texas State Legislature, House Bill 1137, 80th Legislature (May 27, 2007), [www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/80R/billtext/html/HB01137E.htm](http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/80R/billtext/html/HB01137E.htm).

17 Jennifer Radcliffe, "Buying Time for Older High School Diploma Seekers," *Houston Chronicle*, September 14, 2007, [www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Buying-time-for-older-high-school-diploma-seekers-1827008.php](http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Buying-time-for-older-high-school-diploma-seekers-1827008.php).

18 Abby Rapoport and Brian Thevenot, "The Texas High School Dropout Problem," *Texas Tribune*, November 4, 2009, [www.texastribune.org/2009/11/04/the-texas-high-school-dropout-problem/](http://www.texastribune.org/2009/11/04/the-texas-high-school-dropout-problem/).

19 For more information, see Texas Education Agency (TEA), "High-Yield Dropout Prevention/Recovery Program – Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD," updated 2011, [www.tea.state.tx.us/best\\_practices/DisplayBPV2.aspx?id=2147502180](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/best_practices/DisplayBPV2.aspx?id=2147502180).

20 Cecilia Le, *Launching Early College District Wide: Pharr-San Juan-Alamo's 'College for All' Strategy* (Washington, DC: Jobs for the Future, 2012), [www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/ECDS\\_PSJA\\_LaunchingECdistricts\\_032212.pdf](http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/ECDS_PSJA_LaunchingECdistricts_032212.pdf).



## 2. Building the Capacity of Counselors to Support DACA Youth

High schools counselors are particularly well situated to address the needs of immigrant students since concerns regarding immigration status often surface during the college planning process. As interviewees noted, students may be unaware of their own unauthorized status until they are juniors or seniors, since their parents may have avoided discussing the topic and they may not have needed a Social Security number prior to encountering college scholarship applications and financial aid forms. This discovery can be devastating, as students consider the challenges that may face in affording college or finding a job. Counselors and other educators who are well versed in local and state policies affecting unauthorized immigrants and the range of scholarship opportunities available for this population stand to play a critical role in helping students understand their options, and dispelling the myth that unauthorized immigrants cannot go to college.

On a separate but related note, counseling sessions and college access workshops can also present opportunities for youth to learn more about DACA, and gain exposure to legal service providers and community organizations that can help them apply for the program's protections. The districts and schools studied have taken a variety of approaches to counseling unauthorized immigrant students and disseminating information about DACA.

Some districts already had a set of dedicated counselors or support staff for ELLs and immigrant students prior to DACA, and these staff members continued to take the lead in providing guidance for students on immigration status-related issues. In Florida, the team of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) guidance counselors in the School District of Palm Beach County's Multicultural Education Department has received training on working with unauthorized students. Gwinnett County Public Schools in Georgia has three adolescent outreach specialists who supplement the district's regular counseling services by focusing specifically on high school ELLs. This team has played a significant role in disseminating information about DACA requirements and application process to students and families, as well as to other counselors and teachers on an ad hoc basis. Similarly, in Prince George's County, Maryland, eight international student counselors visit local schools to provide services for ELLs and immigrant newcomers. While these counselors have developed particularly strong expertise in DACA-related issues, the entire counseling staff has received information on DACA during district-wide meetings.

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Chicago has undertaken perhaps the most comprehensive effort to train mainstream high school counselors on DACA and college access issues for immigrant students. The *Illinois Dream Act*, enacted in 2011, included a requirement that secondary school counselors have knowledge of the "opportunities for higher education for students who are undocumented immigrants."<sup>21</sup> In Chicago, the Mayor's Office of New Americans and the Chicago Public Schools' Office of College and Career Success responded to this requirement by launching the *Illinois Dream Act Counselor Training* in summer 2013. Several organizations contributed to the development of the curriculum, including the Illinois DREAM Fund Commission, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and key nonprofit organizations, colleges, and universities. The training covers information about DACA, as well as the Illinois in-state tuition law, college savings program, and scholarships for unauthorized students. Counselors also learn

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<sup>21</sup> Illinois General Assembly, Senate Bill 2185, 97th General Assembly (August 1, 2011), [www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2185&GAID=11&GA=97&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=58384&SessionID=84](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2185&GAID=11&GA=97&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=58384&SessionID=84).



strategies for helping immigrant families understand the relative pros and cons of attending different types of higher education institutions, including community colleges, four-year universities, private institutions, and for-profit colleges—giving students the tools to be informed consumers and evaluate their options based on factors such as program quality and cost.

While our fieldwork uncovered many promising practices related to counseling for unauthorized immigrant students and DACA grantees, interviewees still spoke of an enormous unmet need for information dissemination and capacity building. In most cases, school districts had not implemented system-wide training for counselors or other educators on DACA, and as a result, practices and resources varied greatly by school. Some counselors are unaware of the nuances of in-state tuition policies and financial aid opportunities, and unable to share accurate information with their students. Interviewees also reported confusion among educators about the differences between DACA and their own state-level DREAM Act policies.

These capacity challenges appear to be compounded by educators' reluctance to engage in what they perceive to be legally sensitive and politically charged issues related to students' immigration status. Moreover, most districts have a firm policy of not asking students or families for information that might reveal that they are unauthorized immigrants, since practices that could restrict or "chill" enrollment of unauthorized immigrants in K-12 schools are illegal under federal law.

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Finally, even if counselors are well-trained and eager to address the needs of DACA youth, their capacity is often curtailed by high caseloads and other impacts of budget cuts made during the recession. For example, California is home to the nation's largest DACA population and also has the second-highest school counselor caseloads in the United States.<sup>22</sup> In Los Angeles Unified School District, interviewees reported that the ability to provide system-wide training or resources on DACA was undermined by severe, multi-year budget cuts from which the district is only beginning to recover.

### 3. The Role of Immigrant-Serving Organizations: DACA Outreach, Mentoring, and College Access

Immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations have long played a vital role in helping unauthorized youth navigate the college planning process. Our fieldwork demonstrated that such organizations are working in tandem with school district partners in several parts of the country to augment the work of college counselors and provide encouragement, or fill in gaps when schools lack expertise or sensitivity to the needs of unauthorized youth.

Several interviewees highlighted the particular value of information delivered by unauthorized immigrant youth themselves. Unauthorized immigrant college students, many of whom are already DACA grantees, are in the best position to motivate younger students and address their concerns and fears about applying for DACA or going to college. In several New York City public schools, members of Atlas: DIY—a youth-led cooperative in Brooklyn focused on immigrant education and youth empowerment—provide college application assistance and DACA workshops. In the San Francisco Bay Area, youth leaders from the group Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) are trained to serve as Outreach Ambassadors, conducting

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<sup>22</sup> As of 2011-12, California had more than 800 students per guidance counselor compared with a national average of 470. The only state with a higher student-to-counselor ratio was Arizona. See MPI analysis of NCES data in Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, and Michael Fix, *Critical Choices in Post-Recession California: Investing in the Educational and Career Success of Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/critical-choices-post-recession-california-educational-career-success-immigrant-youth](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/critical-choices-post-recession-california-educational-career-success-immigrant-youth).





school-based presentations on DACA, scholarships, and financial aid opportunities for unauthorized immigrants in California. E4FC also plays a capacity-building role, hosting conferences and producing publications for teachers, administrators, and counselors who are interested in learning how to better address the needs of unauthorized students.

Prior to the announcement of DACA, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) had already developed a solid infrastructure for providing school-based outreach to immigrant students and parents, in partnership with consulates, through the City Council-funded Key to the City initiative. Recognizing that schools are often viewed as safe and familiar spaces for immigrant communities, this effort brings consular services and other community resources into schools during multi-day events.<sup>23</sup> Immigrants have the opportunity to obtain consular identification cards or passports on site. While they are waiting for their documents, participants can attend workshops on topics such as health care and financial literacy provided by NYIC and its member organizations. Since 2011, NYIC has partnered with five Latin American consulates and has served more than 22,000 people through 26 events.<sup>24</sup> Over the last two years, NYIC has adapted this model to disseminate information on DACA. Community-based organizations provide free workshops, legal screenings, and application assistance during these events.

NYIC has also taken the lead in building immigrant parents' knowledge of the college planning process. Responding to a need for accessible information in immigrants' native languages, NYIC collaborated with the Internationals Network for Public Schools to produce a guide on the U.S. higher education system, including college costs and scholarship opportunities. This guide, released in six languages, was written at a sixth-grade reading level and contained case studies relevant to unauthorized immigrant families.<sup>25</sup> As the guide's original release coincided with the DACA announcement in 2012, NYIC added basic information on deferred action. More recently, NYIC has collaborated with the New York City Department of Education to institutionalize the guide and expand the scope of its training for educators. As of this report's release, NYIC had distributed approximately 25,000 copies of the original guide and was in the process of producing an updated version, which will be disseminated to all New York City high schools.

While Atlanta does not have a similar infrastructure for supporting immigrant students and families through schools, the nonprofit Latin American Association (LAA) plays a critical role in providing extracurricular academic enrichment and college access programs for Latino students—many of whom are DACA grantees or will become eligible upon reaching age 15. Services include an afterschool mentoring program for Latino students at several middle and high schools in DeKalb and Gwinnett counties, as well as an annual Latino Youth Leadership Conference that draws 1,500 middle and high school students, parents, and teachers from throughout Georgia. The conference offers workshops on the college planning process, as well as an information session on DACA hosted by LAA staff attorneys.

#### 4. Dual Enrollment Programs and Early College High Schools

Dual enrollment programs—which allow high school students to take college-level courses and earn both secondary and postsecondary credit—have gained popularity nationwide as a strategy for accelerating learning and promoting college access. In many cases, students are able to take college courses tuition-free, though they may have to pay for books, fees, or transportation. Early-college high schools are small schools based on a dual enrollment model for all students. Interviewees in several districts noted that dual enrollment provides an important opportunity for DACA recipients and other unauthorized students to

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23 This initiative began as a response to immigrant parents' need for photo identification to enter their children's schools. The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) worked with the New York City Department of Education to change city policies to recognize foreign consular identification cards (*matricula consular*) and passports as valid forms of identification, and then launched partnerships with consulates to provide opportunities for parents to obtain these identification at their local schools.

24 NYIC, "Coalition Begins New Season of 'Key to the City' Events," (news release, September 29, 2014), [www.thenyic.org/PR/CID\\_9.28.14](http://www.thenyic.org/PR/CID_9.28.14).

25 NYIC, "Immigration Coalition and Partners Launch College Guide to Demystify the College Process for Immigrant Parents," (news release, March 20, 2013), [www.thenyic.org/node/1894](http://www.thenyic.org/node/1894).





reduce college education costs—a critical consideration as most unauthorized youth are low-income.

South Texas College—a two-year college located near the U.S.- Mexico border—has one of the largest dual enrollment programs in Texas, serving more than 13,000 students. Dual enrollment students can earn up to 60 credits (the equivalent of two years of college credit) tuition free. Participating school districts include Pharr San-Juan Alamo (PSJA) and Hidalgo Independent School Districts, both of which have adopted a unique, districtwide early college model. PSJA is working toward a goal of enabling all students to graduate from high school with at least 12 college credits, while also annually increasing the number of students who can complete high school with an associate’s degree.<sup>26</sup> High schools use early college instructional strategies developed by the national organization Jobs for the Future to teach the skills needed for success in college-level courses. These strategies include an emphasis on writing and academic language skills, which are particularly important for PSJA’s large population of ELLs and former ELLs.<sup>27</sup> Interviewees reported that the early college approach has been effective for all students, but is particularly beneficial for DACA youth.

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Interviewees in Chicago also underscored the value of dual enrollment for DACA grantees and unauthorized youth. Juniors and seniors in Chicago Public Schools can enroll in one tuition-free dual enrollment course per semester through the City Colleges of Chicago. Students must meet eligibility requirements, including a minimum attendance rate. Academic courses also require a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA), and students must be able to pass a college placement test. While it may be challenging to reach this threshold, interviewees noted that the college wants to ensure that dual enrollment students are prepared to succeed in college-level courses, as the grades will remain on their transcripts.

## **B. Additional Challenges**

The promising practices described above seek to address key challenges facing older youth who want to re-enroll in school, and help students weather the complicated and often discouraging process of planning for college as a DACA grantee or unauthorized immigrant. Still, our fieldwork uncovered several policy barriers that are beyond the scope of these interventions and continue to affect the high school success of DACA youth.

### **I. Difficulty Passing High School Exit Exams**

In several states, interviewees reported that compulsory high school exit exams often pose substantial barriers to graduation and college enrollment for ELLs—some of whom are DACA recipients. This issue is widely acknowledged in Florida, where educators note that ELLs and former ELLs struggle to pass the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).<sup>28</sup> Students who cannot meet this requirement by the end of senior year are unable to earn a regular high school diploma. Instead, they graduate with a certificate of completion, contingent upon meeting all other graduation requirements.<sup>29</sup>

26 Maria Robledo Montecel, *College Bound and Determined* (Washington, DC: International Development Research Association, 2014), [www.idra.org/images/stories/CollegeBoundAndDetermined2014.pdf](http://www.idra.org/images/stories/CollegeBoundAndDetermined2014.pdf).

27 Le, *Launching Early College District Wide*.

28 Students can bypass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) requirement by earning a qualifying score on a college placement test (the ACT or SAT), which some English Language Learners (ELLs) find easier than the FCAT.

29 Florida State Statutes, § 1007.263 (2014), [www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2011/1007.263](http://www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2011/1007.263).



A certificate of completion does not necessarily meet the requirements for admission to an associate or bachelor's degree program in Florida public colleges,<sup>30</sup> however, and may be viewed less favorably by employers. As one interviewee noted, this policy issue severely limits opportunities for a significant segment of the DACA population—and could ultimately prevent these youth from meeting the postsecondary education requirements of potential future DREAM Act legislation.

## 2. Immigration Status Barriers

In states with more restrictive policies regarding college admissions and tuition rates for unauthorized immigrants, barriers to higher education have a damaging effect on the motivation and aspirations of high school students. In Georgia, DACA has not changed the educational options for immigrant youth: DACA grantees are still subject to the University System of Georgia ban on enrollment in the five most selective public universities, and they must pay out-of-state tuition rates at all other institutions. At the high school level, DACA youth are also barred from participating in dual enrollment in Georgia, since dual enrollment courses are supported by its lottery-funded scholarship program and require proof of legal residency. Several interviewees in Georgia spoke about the challenge of working with unauthorized immigrant high school students who become deeply discouraged when they realize the substantial barriers that have been erected to limit their enrollment at the postsecondary level.

### C. Takeaways at the High School Level

- 1. Schools can serve as trusted sources of information on DACA—though their staffs do not always have the technical knowledge to play this role.** Educators need assistance in learning about DACA and directing their students to reputable organizations and legal clinics where they can receive help with their applications. Guidance counselors, in particular, would benefit from training on DACA, as they are often the first point of contact for students who have concerns about their immigration status. Districtwide capacity-building efforts could help to standardize the information available to students and magnify the impact of promising practices in place in many schools. Staff from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Customer Service and Public Engagement Directorate and the U.S. Department of Education can also play a more direct and robust role supporting school districts with DACA outreach efforts and supporting administrators as they navigate school rules protecting the confidentiality of immigration status information.
- 2. Counselors serving unauthorized immigrants also need expertise in local, state, and federal college access policies and scholarships available for this group.** In this separate but related area of capacity-building, school districts have a responsibility to provide their students with accurate information and guidance in the postsecondary planning process. As state policies regarding college access and affordability for unauthorized immigrants have changed substantially over the last several years, and new scholarship programs have emerged, counselors and teachers need opportunities to update their knowledge of the resources available to their students.
- 3. Immigrant serving-organizations can augment or complement schools' efforts by highlighting successful role models and community resources, and helping unauthorized students and families navigate both DACA and the college planning process.** Partnerships

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30 Florida State Statutes, § 1007.263, (2014), [www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=1007.263&URL=1000-1099/1007/Sections/1007.263.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=1007.263&URL=1000-1099/1007/Sections/1007.263.html). Students who meet all other graduation requirements may be able to obtain a College Placement Test (CPT)-Eligible Certificate of Completion and enroll in remedial or credit-bearing courses at a community college, depending on their score on the CPT. Miami-Dade County Public Schools, *Curriculum Bulletin 2014-2015* (Miami, FL: Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2014), [http://winstonpark.dadeschools.net/miami-dade\\_county\\_public\\_schools\\_2014-2015\\_curriculum\\_bulletin.pdf](http://winstonpark.dadeschools.net/miami-dade_county_public_schools_2014-2015_curriculum_bulletin.pdf).



leverage the strengths of both schools and community-based organizations, and expand the scope of local DACA outreach efforts. Immigrant youth-led organizations play a particularly important role, as older youth who have already received deferred action are in a unique position to motivate and alleviate the concerns of other DACA youth, and to share their experiences as unauthorized college students.

4. ***Dropout prevention and recovery programs are important and sometimes underutilized strategies for supporting DACA youth with gaps in their education.*** While DACA provides an incentive for some out-of-school youth to re-enroll, school districts may lack appropriate programs for older immigrant students who have limited credits and extensive remedial needs. School districts can clarify the enrollment options available to these students and adapt existing programs—such as alternative high schools—to better serve DACA youth. Helpful program elements may include flexible schedules, wraparound support services, college and career guidance, internship opportunities, and teachers who are trained to support English language development for ELLs.
5. ***Dual enrollment programs and other acceleration strategies have the potential to make college more affordable for DACA youth, though academically challenging eligibility requirements may limit their reach.*** Dual enrollment helps students to make strides toward a postsecondary degree before graduating from high school, and can be especially beneficial as a cost-saving strategy for DACA youth. Dual enrollment programs vary widely in their eligibility requirements, however: some models are designed to serve academically advanced students, while others have a broader reach and include options for students at varying ability levels. In order to encourage DACA students' participation in dual enrollment, school districts and higher education institutions can expand opportunities for ELLs and lower-performing students to take certain college courses while also receiving supplemental instruction.
6. ***The task facing educators is most challenging in states with more restrictive policies regarding college access for unauthorized immigrant youth.*** Interviewees in Georgia reported that even the most supportive and well-informed educators have difficulty advising DACA youth, because these students' options for higher education remain severely limited.

### III. Postsecondary Education

After high school completion, postsecondary education represents the next critical step on the pathway to a career paying a family-sustaining wage. For DACA youth, a college education could have even greater significance in the event that Congress passes legislation modeled after prior DREAM Act proposals. DACA grantees would be well advised to pursue at least a two-year postsecondary credential rather than risk being left out of the chance for more permanent immigration benefits in the future.

College students represent a relatively high-achieving segment of the total DACA-eligible population, as they have already succeeded in earning a high school diploma and gaining admission to postsecondary education. Interviewees routinely described unauthorized college students as highly motivated, resourceful, and talented. Still, these students face a number of hurdles to degree completion, including challenges that are shared by other students from low-income families and those who are the first in their families to attend college, as well as an additional set of barriers related to their immigration status. College affordability remains the most salient issue affecting this group, in part because DACA recipients are ineligible for federal financial aid or loans.

Despite the restriction on federal financial aid access, the last decade has seen a proliferation of state legislation and institutional efforts to improve college affordability for unauthorized college students.



In many cases these efforts long preceded DACA, though the opportunity to obtain a work permit—and subsequently a higher-paying job—helps grantees better shoulder college tuition costs and living expenses. Nonetheless, our fieldwork found that the extent of DACA's impact on college enrollment and persistence largely depended on the presence, or absence, of state policies and institutional practices supporting college access for unauthorized immigrants.

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*College affordability remains the most salient issue affecting this group, in part because DACA recipients are ineligible for federal financial aid or loans.*

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This section briefly examines the variations in policies related to college admission and affordability in the states included in this study and discusses how specific provisions of these policies affect their reach. It then discusses the ways in which institutions and private scholarship providers have tackled college affordability, and describes several comprehensive efforts to address the broader range of socioemotional and academic needs of unauthorized college students and leverage the opportunities provided by DACA.

#### **A. State Policies on College Admissions and Affordability**

As of this report's writing, at least 20 states had some type of legislation or system-wide policy allowing certain unauthorized immigrants or DACA grantees to pay in-state tuition.<sup>31</sup> Some of the largest immigrant-receiving states led the way in implementing these policies in the early 2000s, including California and Texas (2001), New York (2002), and Illinois (2003). More recently, legislators in several states have attempted to provide access to state financial aid programs, college savings accounts, and other benefits that have traditionally been denied to unauthorized immigrants.

Table 2 provides an overview of the key provisions of policies affecting unauthorized college students in the states studied here. These policies shape the focal strategies of institutions, educators, and partner organizations working with DACA youth in each state.

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<sup>31</sup> United We Dream, "Tuition and State Aid Equity for Undocumented Students and DACA Grantees," accessed November 19, 2014, <http://unitedwedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/DEEPTuitionEquityMapMay2014merged.pdf>.



**Table 2. State Policies on College Enrollment, In-State Tuition, and Financial Aid for Unauthorized Immigrants, Select States**

State	Restrictions on College Enrollment	In-State Tuition Policy	High School Attendance/ Graduation Requirements for In-State Tuition	Other Requirements for In-State Tuition	Eligible for State Financial Aid	Eligible for Additional Benefits
California	No	Yes: Assembly Bill (AB) 540 (2001)	Must have attended a CA high school for 3+ academic years. Must have graduated from a CA high school or earned a high school equivalency diploma, or received a passing mark on the California High School Proficiency Exam.	N/A	Yes: students eligible for AB 540 are also eligible for Cal Grants, community college fee waivers, and institutional aid, dependent on meeting income and/ or academic requirements. AB 130 and AB 131 (2012).	Students eligible for AB 540 are also eligible for student loans in the UC and CSU systems through the California Dream Loan Program. SB 1210 (2014).
Florida	No	Yes: House Bill 851 (2014)*	Must have attended a FL high school for 3+ consecutive years immediately before graduation. GED not accepted.	Must apply to a FL postsecondary institution within 2 years of graduating from high school.	No	N/A
Georgia	Yes: Board of Regents policy (2010) bars enrollment in the state's most academically selective universities.** Bar also extended to DACA grantees.	No: Senate Bill 492 (2008) prohibits in-state tuition for unauthorized immigrants. Bar also extended to DACA grantees.	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
Illinois	No	Yes: House Bill 60 (2003)	Must have attended an IL high school for 3+ consecutive years, and graduated or earned a GED in IL.	N/A	No	Eligible for privately funded scholarships administered through the IL Dream Fund Commission. Also eligible for college savings accounts. SB 2185 (2012).



State	Restrictions on College Enrollment	In-State Tuition Policy	High School Attendance/ Graduation Requirements for In-State Tuition	Other Requirements for In-State Tuition	Eligible for State Financial Aid	Eligible for Additional Benefits
Maryland	No	Yes: Senate Bill 167 (2011; took effect in 2012)	Must have attended a MD high school for 3+ years and graduated or earned a high school equivalency diploma.	Must register at a community college within 4 years of graduating from high school/ receiving an equivalency diploma. To receive in-state tuition for a four-year university, students must have attended a MD community college and earned 60+ credits or an associate's degree.	No	N/A
New York	No	Yes: Senate Bill 7784 (2002)	Must have attended a NY high school for 2+ years or have attended a high school equivalency program, and earned a high school diploma or equivalent.	Must apply to a NY college within 5 years of graduating from high school/ receiving an equivalency diploma.	No	N/A
Texas	No	Yes: House Bill 1403 (2001) and Senate Bill 1528 (2005)	Must have resided in TX for 3+ years before graduating from high school and 1+ years before registering for college. Must have earned a high school diploma or equivalent in TX.	N/A	Yes: students eligible for HB 1403/ SB 1528 are also eligible for state grants, dependent on meeting income and/ or academic requirements.	N/A

\* In Florida, eligible students who are unauthorized immigrants are still coded as nonresidents, but they are given a partial tuition waiver to cover the out-of-state portion of college costs. The partial tuition waiver only applies to 110 percent of the required credit hours for the degree or certificate for which the student is enrolled.

\*\*The bar extends to public institutions that “for the two most recent academic years did not admit all academically qualified applicants.” There are currently five universities in this category: University of Georgia, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, Medical College of Georgia, and Georgia College and State University.

Sources: California State Assembly, Assembly Bill 540 (October 13, 2001), [www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/asm/ab\\_0501-0550/ab\\_540\\_bill\\_20011013\\_chaptered.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/asm/ab_0501-0550/ab_540_bill_20011013_chaptered.html); California Dream Act of 2011, California AB 130, 2011 State Assembly (July 25, 2011), [www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt\\_frm/ab130.pdf](http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/ab130.pdf); Donahoe Higher Education Act, California AB 131, 2011 State Assembly (October 8, 2011), [www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt\\_frm/ab131.pdf](http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/ab131.pdf); California State Assembly, Senate Bill 1210, (September 28, 2014), [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140SB1210](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1210); Florida House of Representatives, House Bill 851, 2014 Legislative Session (July 1, 2014), [www.myfloridahouse.gov/sections/bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=52001](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/sections/bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=52001); Georgia General Assembly, Senate Bill 492, 149th General Assembly (May 14, 2008), [www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/display/20072008/SB/492](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/display/20072008/SB/492); Illinois General Assembly, Senate Bill 2185, 97th General Assembly (August 1, 2011), [www.iga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2185&GAID=11&GA=97&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=58384&SessionID=84](http://www.iga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2185&GAID=11&GA=97&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=58384&SessionID=84); Maryland Senate Bill 167, 2011 Maryland Regular Session (April 8, 2011), <http://mlis.state.md.us/2011rs/billfile/sb0167.htm>; New York Senate Bill 07784, 2002 New York State Assembly (June 20, 2002), [http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default\\_fld=&bn=S07784&term=2001&Summary=Y&Text=Y](http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&bn=S07784&term=2001&Summary=Y&Text=Y); Texas House Bill 1403, 77th State Legislature (June 16, 2001), [www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/77R/billtext/html/HB01403F.htm](http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/77R/billtext/html/HB01403F.htm); and University System of Georgia, “Regents Adopt New Policies on Undocumented Students,” (news release, October 13, 2010), [www.usg.edu/news/release/regents\\_adopt\\_new\\_policies\\_on\\_undocumented\\_students](http://www.usg.edu/news/release/regents_adopt_new_policies_on_undocumented_students).





## I. In-State Tuition

Of the seven states studied, all but Georgia had implemented in-state tuition legislation—often referred to as state DREAM Acts<sup>32</sup>—by this report’s writing. Still, no two policies are the same when it comes to eligibility requirements, and therefore how expansive or narrow their impact can be. And given the differences in eligibility criteria between state policies and DACA, the fine print can be confusing for students, families, educators, and administrative staff.

Apart from Georgia, each of the remaining six states requires unauthorized immigrant students to have attended high school in the state for a minimum number of years (either two or three) and earned a high school diploma in that state. The Florida policy<sup>33</sup> is the only one that does not include students who have completed a GED or high school equivalency diploma. Additionally, Florida’s policy does not grant in-state tuition eligibility, rather gives colleges the ability to grant a waiver for the out-of-state portion of college costs.

Importantly, Florida, Maryland,<sup>34</sup> and New York<sup>35</sup> all place a time limit on the period after high school graduation in which a student must apply to a public college (or enroll, in the case of Maryland). This timeframe is the tightest in Florida (two years). According to interviewees, this excludes a substantial number of unauthorized immigrants who did not apply to college soon after high school graduation due, in many cases, to financial barriers.

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*Given the differences in eligibility criteria between state policies and DACA, the fine print can be confusing for students, families, educators, and administrative staff.*

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Florida also cuts off eligibility for the out-of-state fee waiver if a student has taken an excessive number of courses—110 percent of the credits required for their intended major—without completing a degree. Staying within these guidelines can be challenging for students who lack a clear understanding of their educational goals upon entering college, underscoring a critical need for counseling and educational planning. Meanwhile, the Maryland policy is unique in that it requires students seeking a bachelor’s degree to first attend a community college in the state and earn an associate’s degree or at least 60 college credits in order to be eligible for in-state tuition at a four-year university.

According to interviewees in Maryland and Florida, the passage of in-state tuition legislation led to notable increases in the number of courses taken per term by unauthorized immigrant students. Students can now take three or four courses per term for approximately the same amount they had paid to take one course at a time at the out-of-state rate; this increased course-taking has the potential to dramatically reduce the time it takes to earn a degree.

## 2. State Financial Aid and Other State Benefits

Texas and California have taken additional steps to improve college affordability by extending eligibility

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32 These state policies address issues related to college tuition and affordability; unlike the proposed federal DREAM Act, however, they do not confer legal immigration status.

33 Florida House of Representatives, House Bill 851, 2014 Legislative Session (July 1, 2014), [www.myfloridahouse.gov/sections/bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=52001](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/sections/bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=52001).

34 Maryland Senate Bill 167, 2011 Maryland Regular Session (April 8, 2011), <http://mlis.state.md.us/2011rs/billfile/sb0167.htm>.

35 New York Senate Bill 07784, 2002 New York State Assembly (June 20, 2002), [http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default\\_fld=&bn=S07784&term=2001&Summary=Y&Text=Y](http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&bn=S07784&term=2001&Summary=Y&Text=Y).



for state financial aid to unauthorized immigrants meeting the criteria for in-state tuition. In both states, those seeking state aid must meet the same income and academic requirements that apply to all students. Texas has allowed qualified unauthorized immigrants to receive these funds since the passage of House Bill 1403<sup>36</sup> in 2001, while California's benefits were more recently enacted through Assembly Bills (AB) 130 and 131 in 2012.<sup>37</sup> The California policies represent a particularly large step toward removing the financial barriers facing unauthorized immigrants, as they can now access one of the most generous need-based financial aid systems in the country, which includes Cal Grants for enrollment in California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) institutions and fee waivers for low-income students in California Community Colleges (CCC). In addition, 2014 state legislation<sup>38</sup> created the California Dream Loan Program, which will allow unauthorized immigrants to receive student loans in the CSU and UC systems. DACA grantees are also able to use their work permits for work-study jobs on UC campuses.

Illinois, meanwhile, does not extend state financial aid to unauthorized immigrants, but 2010 legislation<sup>39</sup> created the Illinois Dream Fund, a state-administered, privately funded scholarship program. This legislation also allowed unauthorized immigrant families to participate in a state-operated college savings pool by using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in lieu of a Social Security number. In its initial years of implementation, the Illinois Dream Fund saw higher-than-anticipated demand and struggled to meet its fundraising goals, receiving more than 1,500 applications in 2013 and awarding 36 scholarships.<sup>40</sup> While these scholarships have a powerful impact on college opportunities for recipients, the program, which is barred from tapping into state funding streams, remains relatively limited in its reach.

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*Private and institutional scholarship programs play a critical role and are needed to expand college opportunities for DACA grantees and unauthorized youth more generally.*

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## **B. Promising Institutional Practices and Partnerships**

### **I. Scholarships for Unauthorized Immigrant Students**

Given the high hurdle college affordability poses to DACA youth in all seven study states, private and institutional scholarship programs play a critical role and are needed to expand college opportunities for DACA grantees and unauthorized youth more generally. This section describes a few scholarship programs at colleges included in this study, though there are many more scholarship opportunities nationwide that are accessible to DACA youth. Scholarship programs differ widely in their target populations, selection criteria, scope, and amount of financial support.

Unlike most other programs serving unauthorized immigrants, the “Dream.US” scholarship was created specifically to help DACA grantees complete college. This national scholarship program was created in

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36 Texas House Bill 1403, 77th State Legislature (June 16, 2001), [www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/77R/billtext/html/HB01403E.htm](http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/77R/billtext/html/HB01403E.htm).

37 *California Dream Act of 2011, Donahoe Higher Education Act*.

38 California State Assembly, Senate Bill 1210, (September 28, 2014), [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140SB1210](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1210).

39 Illinois General Assembly, Senate Bill 2185, 97th General Assembly (August 1, 2011), [www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2185&GAID=11&GA=97&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=58384&SessionID=84](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2185&GAID=11&GA=97&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=58384&SessionID=84).

40 Paul Merrion, “Why these scholarship dreams are being deferred,” *Crain’s Chicago Business*, May 2, 2013, [www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20130502/NEWS02/130439960/why-these-scholarship-dreams-are-being-deferred](http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20130502/NEWS02/130439960/why-these-scholarship-dreams-are-being-deferred); Illinois Dream Fund Commission, “Welcome from Governor Pat Quinn,” accessed November 24, 2014, [www2.illinois.gov/gov/dreamfund/Pages/default.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/dreamfund/Pages/default.aspx).



2013 with the goal of helping 2,000 low-income DACA grantees graduate from college.<sup>41</sup> Applicants must be eligible and have applied for DACA, and must renew their deferred action status on time to maintain their scholarship. The expanding program currently serves students at 51 partner colleges nationwide, including community colleges, public four-year universities, Catholic universities, and online institutions. Partner institutions must have a track record of supporting and graduating low-income students from under-represented groups. The scholarship pays all tuition costs and fees that are not otherwise covered by available financial aid, and some recipients are eligible for a book stipend. Scholarship recipients also receive academic advising from a dedicated counselor at each partner institution. Miami Dade College had the largest initial cohort of Dream.US scholars, and interviewees commented that this program represents a major improvement in college access for a group that, until recently, had few resources at its disposal in Florida. Like other scholarship programs, however, demand exceeds supply: 120 Miami Dade students received the Dream.US scholarship even as the college anticipated enrollment of approximately 1,000 unauthorized immigrants eligible for an out-of-state waiver in fall 2014.<sup>42</sup>

This study also uncovered several smaller scholarships that are targeted to unauthorized immigrants more broadly. These scholarships generally predated DACA implementation, and recipients are not required to have received deferred action. At Palm Beach State College in Florida, a campus resource center dedicated to immigrant students, the Global Education Center, provides privately funded scholarships to immigrant students with high levels of financial need. Recipients, who can be full-time or part-time students, also receive supplemental advising and peer mentoring. The scholarship typically serves approximately 40 students per term, though the number may grow as tuition costs for unauthorized immigrants have declined considerably since passage of Florida's out-of-state tuition waiver policy.

Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) also awards a limited number of annual scholarships for unauthorized immigrant students in the San Francisco Bay Area. Its New American Scholars program selects undergraduate and graduate-level scholarship recipients based on merit, financial need, and community service. Consulates can also be an important source of scholarship support for their nationals, regardless of immigration status. The Mexican Consulate in Sacramento, for instance, awards college scholarships to students who have experienced personal hardship—many of whom are unauthorized immigrants—in partnership with a local civic action group, Cien Amigos.

Finally, several colleges included in our fieldwork allow unauthorized immigrants to receive institutional scholarships available to all students. The City Colleges of Chicago have attempted to improve the transparency and accessibility of information on institutional scholarship opportunities by creating a website with resources for unauthorized students. The college system also revised its financial aid process so that unauthorized immigrants and DACA grantees can apply for scholarships without having to fill out a Federal Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA). Beginning in fall 2015, the newly created Chicago STAR Scholarship will cover the full cost of tuition and fees in associate degree programs at City Colleges of Chicago for all Chicago Public Schools graduates meeting certain academic requirements.<sup>43</sup>

The University of Texas Pan-American (UTPA), Alamo Colleges (Texas), and Montgomery College (Maryland) also extend eligibility for institutional scholarships to all students regardless of immigration status, though interviewees report that demand outstrips supply. UTPA has a dedicated financial aid counselor with expertise in serving unauthorized immigrant students, and Montgomery College trains its enrollment specialists to answer unauthorized immigrants' questions about these scholarships, as well as in-state tuition and DACA.

41 TheDream.US, "Mission, Vision, Belief," accessed November 19, 2014, [www.thedream.us/about-us/mission-vision-belief/](http://www.thedream.us/about-us/mission-vision-belief/).

42 Note that this is not a direct comparison, as the eligibility criteria for Florida's out-of-state fee waiver and the Dream.US scholarship are somewhat different.

43 Requirements include a minimum 3.0 high school grade point average (GPA) and scoring at the college-ready level on a placement test. The scholarship will be open to unauthorized immigrants and DACA grantees. City Colleges of Chicago, "Chicago Star Scholarship," accessed November 19, 2014, [www.ccc.edu/menu/Documents/Internal%20Comm/STARScholarshipInfo.pdf](http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Documents/Internal%20Comm/STARScholarshipInfo.pdf).



## 2. Campus Resource Centers and Advising Programs

Compounding the challenges associated with college affordability, unauthorized immigrant students—like others from groups that are under-represented in higher education—often struggle to navigate a confusing array of requirements and resources on college campuses. They also frequently juggle adult responsibilities and concerns, including work, caring for family members, and dealing with immigration-related issues and fears, each of which serves as a barrier to college completion. Institutions nationwide have developed a wide range of student support centers and advising programs to help students from under-represented groups weather personal challenges as well as academic difficulties and develop a stronger sense of belonging on campus.

Many of the institutions included in this study have developed counseling and mentorship programs or resource centers that do not specifically target immigrants, but often play a key role in supporting these students along with other groups. For instance, the Georgia Perimeter College Educational Achievement Program (GEAP) provides advice and personalized assistance with the financial aid process for Latino students. This program was initially supported through a private foundation grant and included a scholarship component for an annual cohort of 120 Latino full-time students. Although the scholarship program ended in 2013, GEAP continues to provide assistance with academic planning and course registration for students who choose to participate. The program director also helps unauthorized immigrant students understand the costs of college and weigh their options, including online courses and establishing a payment plan.

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*Unauthorized immigrant students...often struggle to navigate a confusing array of requirements and resources on college campuses.*

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A few colleges and universities with large numbers of unauthorized immigrant students have created dedicated resource centers and counseling programs. California State University-Northridge (CSUN) has a range of services and support networks for those known as AB 540 students, in reference to California's in-state tuition law.<sup>44</sup> Like other California colleges and universities, CSUN offers state-supported Equal Opportunity Programs (EOPs) that provide academic and social support, along with financial assistance, to improve access and retention for low-income students and those who are the first in their families to attend college.

Unlike most institutions, CSUN's EOPs office decided to include a specific focus on the needs of unauthorized immigrants approximately eight years ago—even though these students were not eligible for state-supported financial aid at that time. The EOP AB 540 Initiative raises campus awareness of the needs of unauthorized immigrants and trains faculty liaisons from each academic college to serve as dedicated advisors. These liaisons help students with educational and career planning, and intervene on their behalf when they experience problems with university administrative offices. Since the passage of the *California Dream Act* in 2012, unauthorized immigrants are eligible for full participation in EOPs programs, and faculty liaisons ensure that students have all documentation needed to qualify.

The EOPs office will also house the CSUN Undocumented Student Resource Center, which is scheduled to open in spring 2015.<sup>45</sup> Serving as a hub of campus resources for unauthorized immigrants, the center will host programs including DACA workshops offered in collaboration with legal service providers, as well as information sessions on California financial aid policies and the *California Dream Act* application process.

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44 California State Assembly, Assembly Bill 540 (October 13, 2001), [www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/asm/ab\\_0501-0550/ab\\_540\\_bill\\_20011013\\_chaptered.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/asm/ab_0501-0550/ab_540_bill_20011013_chaptered.html).

45 Corey, "CSUs Lag Behind UCs."



### **Box I. Freedom University: Innovation in Response to Restrictive State Policies**

Freedom University began in 2011 as a response to the University System of Georgia ban on the enrollment of unauthorized immigrants in the state's five most academically selective institutions. At the request of DREAMer youth advocates, supportive faculty members came together to offer unofficial, college-level courses to students affected by the ban. Since its inception, the program has enrolled approximately 100 students per year in tuition-free courses that meet on Sundays. Based on the model of the Southern "freedom schools" of the civil-rights era, the curriculum has a strong focus on social justice issues, through courses such as "Skill Building for Social Change," along with history, literature, and arts. Notably, the courses also include a focus on college applications, since Freedom University aims to prepare many of its students to compete for private scholarships to colleges outside of Georgia. Approximately 20 percent of students leave Freedom University after one year with a full scholarship to a private or public college in another state; these institutions have included Dartmouth University and Hampshire College.

The center will also provide a meeting space for Dreams to Be Heard, the campus' student-led DREAMer advocacy group.

The University of California, meanwhile, enrolls fewer unauthorized immigrants than California State University or the California Community Colleges<sup>46</sup> but stands out in terms of the resources dedicated to support these students. In 2013, UC President Janet Napolitano provided \$5 million in discretionary funds for student services, trained advisors, and scholarships for unauthorized immigrants.<sup>47</sup> At the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), these new funds doubled the budget of the Bruin Resource Center's Undocumented Students Program, allowing the program to add staff, conduct DACA renewal workshops, and provide need-based financial support in the form of meal vouchers, donated textbooks, transportation assistance, and emergency grants. Now that DACA has opened the door to temporary work authorization, the Undocumented Students Program has expanded its focus to include career preparation and employment assistance, and the UndocuBruin Research Program and UndocuScholars Project provide funding for research opportunities for DACA grantees.

Overall, interviewees at UCLA and CSUN reported DACA has a positive impact on students' participation in college life as well as their post-college aspirations. DACA grantees are able to complete internships and practicums, as well as to hold campus jobs that are relatively well-paid, are suitable for their class schedules, and help them to build a legal employment track record. Some students reportedly have a stronger sense of confidence and sense of safety on campus since receiving DACA.

### **3. Innovative Approaches to Remediation**

Many immigrant students have remaining gaps in their academic English skills upon entering two-year and four-year colleges, and they are often required to complete a lengthy series of remedial courses that do not confer credit toward their degree or major. The problems with traditional college approaches to remediation have been well documented: these courses generally have low success rates, and students risk using up scholarships or financial aid before they even get to college-level coursework.<sup>48</sup> College-going ELLs, in particular, often find themselves in limbo: their English skills may be too advanced for free or low-cost ESL courses provided by the adult education system, but not high enough to pass college placement tests.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> University of California Office of the President, "President Announces Initiatives to Aid Students, Researchers," (news release, University of California, October 30, 2013), [www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/president-announces-initiatives-aid-students-researchers](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/president-announces-initiatives-aid-students-researchers).

<sup>48</sup> Complete College America, *Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere* (Washington, DC: Complete College America, 2012), [www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf](http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf); Thomas Bailey, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho, "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Courses in Community Colleges," *Economics of Education Review* 29, no. 2 (2010): 255-70.





The City University of New York (CUNY) Language Immersion Program (CLIP) was designed as a solution to this challenge for highly motivated students who have been admitted as college freshmen but have a need for ESL instruction. These students can choose to defer their admission and attend a one- or two-semester intensive language program that meets 25 hours per week. This program is low-cost: students are charged \$180 per semester,<sup>49</sup> instead of spending approximately \$2,400 per semester<sup>50</sup> on full-time college enrollment. The program serves approximately 6,000 students per year, including high school graduates as well as many students who have completed Spanish-language high school equivalency diplomas in New York City alternative high schools or adult education programs.

CLIP provides an opportunity for DACA grantees, as well as other immigrant students, to take the next step toward a two-year degree while reducing the cost of remediation. Interviewees attribute the program's success to its content-based curriculum which hones students' English skills through subjects such as history, science, and art, as well as its focus on advising and introducing students to the range of CUNY services. The heavy program time commitment poses a barrier for some working students, however.

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*Even in states where DACA youth have access to in-state tuition, financial aid, and scholarships, interviewees cited various affordability challenges.*

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### C. Additional Challenges

#### I. Overarching Barriers to College Access and Affordability

Even in states where DACA youth have access to in-state tuition, financial aid, and scholarships, interviewees cited various affordability challenges. Unauthorized immigrants and DACA grantees still face a federal aid gap, compared to other students from low-income families, and this barrier can have a measurable impact on their ability to participate fully in college and cover living expenses, especially when living on or near campus is particularly expensive.

The states included in this study also differ in terms of the underlying cost of college tuition and fees for all students. Table 3 provides a glimpse at the prices of full-time tuition and fees for DACA youth attending a large community college in each state in 2014-15. For institutions in all states except Georgia, the cost listed is for individuals who meet the eligibility requirements for in-state tuition for unauthorized immigrants (as described in Table 1), as well as in-district rates where applicable. In-state tuition and fees range from \$600 per semester in the Los Angeles Community College District to \$2,400 per semester at LaGuardia Community College in New York City. Notably, community colleges in California and Texas are the most affordable—and these are also the only two states in our study that extend state financial aid to unauthorized immigrants, further reducing the cost of attendance.

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49 Students demonstrating financial hardship can pay a reduced tuition of \$45, though interviewees report that most students pay the full \$180.

50 Based on in-state tuition for 12 credits.



**Table 3. Approximate Cost of Full-Time College Tuition and Fees per Semester, Select Community Colleges, 2014-15**

State	Institution	Approximate Cost of Tuition and Fees for 12 Credit Hours
California	Los Angeles Community College District	\$600
Florida	Miami Dade College	\$1,400
Georgia	Georgia Perimeter College	\$4,500 (out-of-state rate)*
Illinois	City Colleges of Chicago	\$1,300**
Maryland	Montgomery College	\$1,800**
New York	LaGuardia Community College	\$2,400
Texas	Alamo Colleges	\$900**

\* The cost listed for Georgia Perimeter College includes out-of-state tuition and fees, as unauthorized immigrants and DACA recipients are ineligible for in-state tuition in Georgia. For all other institutions, the cost listed is for a student meeting the requirements for in-state tuition.

\*\* This rate is for a student meeting both in-state and in-district requirements.

*Notes:* Rates are in-state and in-district unless otherwise noted. Rates listed are for tuition for 12 credit hours, plus mandatory fees for on-campus students (not including lab fees or other additional fees that apply only to specific types of courses). At Miami Dade College, the cost listed is for associate's degree programs only. These rates are based on published information on each college's website, but should not be interpreted as guidance on the actual cost of college for any individual student. Additional fees may apply to certain courses and programs, and the full cost of attendance also varies based on the availability of financial aid and scholarships.

*Sources:* LAColleges.net, "How Much Does it Cost to Attend," [www.lacolleges.net/admissions/fees.asp](http://www.lacolleges.net/admissions/fees.asp); Miami Dade College, Academic Programs, "Tuition and Fees," [www.mdc.edu/main/academics/tuition.aspx](http://www.mdc.edu/main/academics/tuition.aspx); Georgia Perimeter College, Student Accounts Office, "2014-2015 Tuition and Fees," [http://depts.gpc.edu/~gpcsaacct/resources/tuition\\_and\\_fees.html](http://depts.gpc.edu/~gpcsaacct/resources/tuition_and_fees.html); Montgomery College, Admissions and Records, "2014/2015 Tuition and Fee Schedule," <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/department2.aspx?id=20126>; LaGuardia Community College, "Tuition and Fees," [www.lagcc.cuny.edu/Bursars/Tuition-and-Fees/](http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/Bursars/Tuition-and-Fees/); Alamo Colleges, "Schedule of Tuition and Fees, Effective Fall 2014," [www.alamo.edu/uploadedFiles/District/Admissions/pdfs/Fall-2014-Tuition-Fees.pdf](http://www.alamo.edu/uploadedFiles/District/Admissions/pdfs/Fall-2014-Tuition-Fees.pdf). All websites were accessed December 8, 2014.

In addition, as many states have passed legislation intended to improve higher education access for unauthorized immigrants in recent years, the gaps between states that offer more support and less support have grown (see Table 2). Georgia deserves mention as a special case among the states studied. Georgia legislation<sup>51</sup> prohibits unauthorized immigrants from receiving in-state tuition, which causes them to pay out-of-state tuition costs that are two to three times higher. At Georgia Perimeter College—the state's largest open-access institution and pathway transfer engine for four-year universities—DACA youth pay more than \$4,500 per semester in 2014-15 (see Table 3), compared with approximately \$1,600 for in-state students. The University System of Georgia also requires all colleges to verify applicants' legal immigration status and bars unauthorized immigrants from enrolling in the state's most academically selective institutions.<sup>52</sup> Georgia extends this ban, along with the prohibition on in-state tuition, to DACA grantees.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, DACA has not changed the most significant barriers to college facing unauthorized immigrants in Georgia.

Interviewees from Georgia overwhelmingly reported that the high cost of out-of-state tuition makes higher education virtually unattainable for some DACA grantees. Those who attend college often take one

51 Georgia General Assembly, Senate Bill 492, 149th General Assembly (May 14, 2008), [www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/display/20072008/SB/492](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/display/20072008/SB/492).

52 The enrollment ban applies to the state's most competitive public institutions: those that "for the two most recent academic years, did not admit all academically qualified applicants." See University System of Georgia, "Regents Adopt New Policies on Undocumented Students," (news release, October 13, 2010), [www.usg.edu/news/release/regents\\_adopt\\_new\\_policies\\_on\\_undocumented\\_students](http://www.usg.edu/news/release/regents_adopt_new_policies_on_undocumented_students). The following institutions currently meet these criteria: University of Georgia, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, Medical College of Georgia, and Georgia College and State University.

53 Georgia State University, Undergraduate Admissions, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," accessed November 17, 2014, <http://admissions.gsu.edu/how-do-i-apply/international-students/daca/>.



class at a time or enroll in online courses, as these courses have a lower tuition rate<sup>54</sup> that is not affected by residency status. Online courses are arguably not a good fit for all, however, as they require a high level of maturity and self-direction, and many students want the opportunity to be part of a college campus.

## 2. Inconsistent Implementation of State Policies

Importantly, interviewees in several states reported that policies intended to reduce college costs for unauthorized immigrants are often not advertised or applied consistently at the institutional level, and noted frequent confusion among administrative staff, faculty, and students as to policy terms. Since the Maryland and Florida in-state tuition laws are the most recent, they offer an opportunity to examine policy implementation inconsistencies.

The Florida law was enacted very recently (July 2014), and fieldwork interviews occurred as institutions there were in the initial stages of interpreting the legislation. The Florida College System and State University System of Florida did not create a standardized form or process for students to demonstrate that they meet eligibility requirements to have the out-of-state portion of their costs waived. Instead, colleges had to create their own processes, and interviewees noted that implementation was proactive at some institutions, and less so at others. Miami Dade College—long considered one of the state’s most supportive institutions for unauthorized immigrants—created a website with information on the policy, as well as an online form to make the process of applying for a waiver for out-of-state costs relatively accessible and transparent.<sup>55</sup> At Palm Beach State College, the registrar’s office designated a six-person team to process the new waiver requests and verify student eligibility. Interviewees reported that other institutions were less familiar with the policy, and unauthorized immigrant students occasionally turned to community organizations, teachers, and counselors to advocate on their behalf with college registrars and other administrators.

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Meanwhile, Maryland’s in-state tuition legislation took effect in December 2012, and implementation offered its own set of challenges. Some colleges, including Montgomery College, even before the legislation’s enactment extended their discounted “in-county” rate to all students who graduated from a Montgomery County high school, regardless of immigration status. At these colleges, interviewees reported that the additional requirements to demonstrate in-state tuition eligibility were initially confusing to staff and students and more onerous.

## D. Takeaways at the Postsecondary Level

- 1. In-state tuition laws have the potential to increase college going and completion rates among DACA youth, but the terms of these policies vary substantially across states. Eligibility requirements may exclude students who have taken a nontraditional path to higher education, such as GED completers and older students.*** Among study states, the Florida policy—

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54 The 2014-15 tuition rate for online courses is \$125 per credit hour, plus applicable fees. The tuition rate for campus-based courses is \$88.67 per credit hour for in-state students, and \$335.60 per credit hour for out-of-state students. Georgia Perimeter College, Student Accounts Office, “2014-2015 Tuition and Fees,” accessed November 19, 2014, [http://depts.gpc.edu/~gpcsaacct/resources/tuition\\_and\\_fees.html](http://depts.gpc.edu/~gpcsaacct/resources/tuition_and_fees.html).

55 Miami Dade College, Admissions and Registration, “Out-of-State Fee Waiver for Select Florida High School Graduates,” accessed November 19, 2014, [www.mdc.edu/admissions/waiver.aspx](http://www.mdc.edu/admissions/waiver.aspx).



which was enacted most recently—places the tightest restrictions on eligibility. In order to benefit from this legislation, students need to graduate with a standard high school diploma, apply for college within two years, and refrain from taking an excessive number of courses. These requirements may not fit the reality of many DACA youth, as immigrants are more likely than the average undergraduate student to enroll in college at an older age and work while in school.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, some of the longest-standing in-state tuition policies are the most generous in terms of their eligibility requirements. Further analysis of the differences across state policies and their disparate effects can better inform new efforts to improve higher education access policies for DACA-eligible youth.

- 2. *Implementation challenges prevent supportive state policies from reaching their full potential.*** Interviewees in several states reported substantial differences across colleges in their implementation of in-state tuition, financial aid, and other policies affecting DACA youth. While some institutions have responded proactively by building staff capacity, publishing accessible guides for students and families, and conducting workshops on relevant policies, other colleges have been less forthcoming with information and staff may be unaware of the rights of unauthorized students under state legislation. Information dissemination, transparency, and capacity-building efforts could improve consistency in policy implementation across institutions.
- 3. *Beyond in-state tuition, policies offering state financial aid, scholarships, loans, and other cost-saving measures for DACA youth represent significant steps toward leveling the playing field. However, few states have adopted policies permitting access to a full range of financial assistance programs.*** While six of the seven states studied offered in-state tuition for certain unauthorized immigrants, the financial burden of attending college varies substantially for DACA grantees across states. For instance, California and Texas offer state financial aid and have the lowest overall community college tuition. Meanwhile, New York does not extend state financial aid to unauthorized immigrants, and community college costs are relatively high.
- 4. *Private funders and some public institutions have created tailored scholarship programs for DACA youth; however, demand usually far outstrips supply.*** Several colleges have made certain institutional scholarships funded through their endowments available to all students, regardless of immigration status. These colleges have addressed implementation hurdles as necessary by creating new forms to assess eligibility without involving the federal financial aid process, and training administrative staff on awarding funds to unauthorized immigrants. At the national level, DACA has spurred the creation of new scholarship programs, including TheDream.US, that aim to promote the college completion of DACA grantees by covering the full cost of tuition and fees. Overall, however, the limited supply of scholarships for DACA youth often means that only the most academically prepared students are able to benefit from these opportunities.
- 5. *Well-structured advising and social services play a key role in helping DACA youth navigate college administrative systems, develop a sense of belonging on campus, and progress along a college and career trajectory.*** Beyond affordability, DACA youth face a number of other challenges to college retention and success. Some of these barriers are shared by other groups of low-income students, such as the stress of balancing work and family responsibilities on top of academics, while others relate specifically to their immigration status. Institutions can respond to the challenges facing DACA youth by creating dedicated campus resource centers and funding staff positions focused on unauthorized immigrant students' success, or by adapting existing programs and developing staff expertise in the unique needs

<sup>56</sup> Sandra Staklis and Laura Horn, *New Americans in Postsecondary Education: A Profile of Immigrant and Second-Generation American Undergraduates* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012213.pdf>.



and concerns of this group.

- 6. Accelerated, content-based approaches to English remediation provide an important on-ramp to college-level work.** By offering low-cost, intensive ESL instruction, the CUNY CLIP program helps incoming immigrant students master the academic literacy skills needed for college success. This program requires a heavy time commitment, however, which can be a challenge for working students. As colleges design ESL remediation programs and recruit students, they can strive to make these courses accessible to DACA youth by taking into account factors such as cost, scheduling, child care, and other support or counseling services that may be necessary for student success.

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*In many cities and states, the months after launch of the DACA program saw a surge in demand for adult education.*

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## IV. Adult Education

For individuals who do not meet DACA education requirements because they lack a high school diploma or its equivalent and are not enrolled in school, the adult education system represents a pathway to DACA eligibility. Qualifying programs include adult secondary education (ASE) leading to a high school diploma, GED, or other high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, as well as adult basic education (ABE) or ESL instruction that “has a purpose of improving literacy, mathematics, or English or is designed to lead to placement in postsecondary education, job training, or employment.”<sup>57</sup> Adult education programs serve a critical, dual function for immigrants who are beyond the age limits of traditional high schools: they open the door to DACA’s immigration benefits and to better-paying jobs that require higher levels of educational attainment and English proficiency. Enrollment in an adult education program can also represent the first step toward completion of a postsecondary degree or certificate.

In many cities and states, the months after launch of the DACA program saw a surge in demand for adult education. In particular, enrollment rose in ASE classes providing GED preparation, as the original guidelines released by USCIS gave many providers the impression that only these courses qualified for DACA.<sup>58</sup> USCIS revised its guidelines on June 5, 2014 to clarify that ESL and ABE courses also meet DACA education requirements.

By tying DACA eligibility to ASE, ABE, and ESL enrollment, USCIS made the eligibility of hundreds of thousands of potential DACA applicants dependent on their success in finding and securing a seat in a local adult education program; however, program seats are almost uniformly in short supply and in some states unauthorized immigrants are even barred from accessing publicly funded programs. Nationwide, overall enrollment in publicly funded adult education programs fell by nearly 613,000 seats (27 percent) from 2007-08 to 2012-13, due primarily to the impact of state budget cuts made during the recent

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57 USCIS, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed November 19, 2014, [www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions#education](http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions#education).

58 The original USCIS guidelines indicated that the only adult education programs that met DACA’s education requirements were those that led to a high school equivalency diploma or placement in college, employment, or career-training programs. USCIS, “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process,” updated August 14, 2012, [www.aila.org/content/viewer.aspx?docid=41136&linkid=251201](http://www.aila.org/content/viewer.aspx?docid=41136&linkid=251201). They also stated that qualifying adult education programs should be funded, at least in part, by federal or state grants, or meet vaguely defined criteria of “demonstrated effectiveness.” Ibid. USCIS has since refined its guidelines to include programs that are funded by municipal grants or administered by nonprofit organizations in the category of programs that are deemed acceptable without having to meet the demonstrated effectiveness threshold. USCIS, “Frequently Asked Questions.”





recession.<sup>59</sup> In ASE programs, total enrollment was less than 194,000 in 2012-13—a small fraction of the 23.8 million adults in the United States who lack a high school diploma,<sup>60</sup> and less than half the capacity needed for just the number of potential DACA applicants who are eligible but for education.<sup>61</sup> Thus it is not surprising that in some regions, youth seeking to enroll in a program and access DACA were placed on lengthy waiting lists.

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*Despite pervasive capacity limitations and the challenges of serving high-need groups, local adult education providers have played a key role in implementation of DACA.*

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Among those who are eligible but for education, skill levels vary substantially, ranging from those who completed most of their schooling in the United States before dropping out in the final years of high school, to those who immigrated as adolescents and entered the workforce without ever “dropping in” to U.S. schools. Overall, 38 percent had completed less than a 9th grade education, either in the United States or their country of origin.<sup>62</sup> Since many members of this group are already in the labor force and are heads of households, they often face numerous barriers to returning to school, and the path to an HSE diploma—let alone college enrollment—can be long and difficult.

Despite pervasive capacity limitations and the challenges of serving high-need groups, local adult education providers have played a key role in implementation of DACA. As a baseline practice, they provided letters of enrollment that their students could submit to USCIS to demonstrate that they were enrolled in a qualified education program. Intermediary organizations, government agencies, and consulates all took steps to address adult education providers’ confusion and concerns about DACA, build their technical knowledge of program requirements, and support their response. In the Sacramento area, for instance, the Mexican Consulate organized informational meetings on DACA for the directors of adult schools across a five-county region. The consulate also helped address confusion among adult education programs by creating a template for use by qualified local programs seeking to provide DACA applicants with letters proving their enrollment.

We found that in some instances adult education providers, concerned that DACA applicants would drop out of programs shortly after receiving their letters of enrollment, acted on their own to establish a minimum number of hours of attendance before students could receive documentation for their DACA applications. For example, one nonprofit provider in Georgia required individuals to attend classes for 22 hours and pass at least one section of a GED practice test before they could get this letter—even though such a requirement was never part of USCIS policy.

Looking beyond baseline practices related to providing verification of enrollment to DACA applicants, following are descriptions of a number of promising initiatives our fieldwork uncovered in the adult education field that aim to substantially improve the education and career outcomes of DACA students.

<sup>59</sup> These figures reflect declines in enrollment in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs receiving federal *Workforce Investment Act* (WIA) Title II funds in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, National Reporting System: “State Enrollment by Program Type (ABE, ESL, ASE): All States,” program years 2007-12. In Margie McHugh, *Diploma Please: Promoting Educational Attainment for DACA- and Potential DREAM Act- Eligible Youth* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/diploma-please-promoting-educational-attainment-daca-and-potential-dream-act-eligible-youth](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/diploma-please-promoting-educational-attainment-daca-and-potential-dream-act-eligible-youth).

<sup>60</sup> MPI analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2010-12 pooled data.

<sup>61</sup> MPI estimates that 426,000 individuals were “eligible but for education” at the time of DACA’s launch in 2012. See Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*. This number has increased due to the recent DACA expansion; however, some members of this group also qualify for the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program, which does not include an education requirement.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



## A. Promising Practices

### I. Coordination of Services: The Role of Local Governments

Given the limited capacity of most local adult education systems and the difficulties many immigrant youth face in identifying programs that can simultaneously meet USCIS requirements as well as their education and career goals, efforts that address these barriers for DACA youth stand to play an important role in promoting their educational success. However, since issues of improving system capacity and navigation are within the purview of government administrators, not individual programs, governments must act to create coordinated, cross-system responses.

The New York City DACA Initiative, launched in July 2013, represents the largest such effort in the country. This \$18 million, City Council-funded initiative has three pillars: adult education, nonprofit legal services, and community outreach.<sup>63</sup> With adult education at the leading edge of New York's response, the city government placed a direct focus on the barriers to DACA facing lower-educated individuals. Recognizing that there were insufficient seats in New York City's publicly funded adult education programs to serve this group, the initiative dedicated approximately \$8 million over two years to adult education programs. These funds are channeled through the city Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) under the Young Immigrant Literacy Program. DYCD administers these funds through contracts with 36 community-based organizations (CBOs) offering adult education programs in the New York area. Among these programs, nine are ABE/ASE programs and 27 are ESL programs that also include a required workforce readiness component.

Students in Young Immigrant Literacy Program courses receive an extensive orientation on DACA, often provided by external partner organizations through an in-class presentation or a video created by the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). Teachers then encourage those who might be eligible to approach staff individually and receive a referral to a DYCD-funded legal services provider.

The Young Immigrant Literacy programs enrolled 3,700 potentially DACA-eligible individuals during the city DACA initiative's first year, and DYCD-funded legal service providers assisted 1,500 individuals. Moreover, community outreach providers made approximately 2,600 referrals to adult education programs and 1,600 referrals to legal service providers. Being referred by one of the initiative's legal service or community outreach providers is advantageous for adult education students, as they are deemed a priority for enrollment, allowing them to bypass course waiting lists.

As part of the city's DACA initiative, CUNY also received \$4.3 million to expand its noncredit adult education course offerings and provide professional development for adult ESL teachers throughout New York City. Training topics have included civics and immigrant integration issues; preparation for the state's new HSE exam;<sup>64</sup> and counseling and advice for DACA students interested in postsecondary education or vocational training.

### 2. Spanish-Language High School Equivalency Programs

Achieving an HSE diploma can be a multiyear, multistep process for DACA youth who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and/or gaps in their underlying levels of education. In many states and cities, the adult education system has a sequential design, and LEP individuals are required to first complete a long series of ESL courses before beginning the academic content courses leading to an HSE diploma. Some interviewees have identified Spanish-language HSE programs—which are often combined with ESL

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<sup>63</sup> The Council of the City of New York, "Speaker Quinn, New York City Council Members, Bloomberg Administration and Advocates Announce Funding to Provide New Yorkers Immigration Relief," (news release, July 17, 2013), <http://council.nyc.gov/html/pr/071713daca.shtml>.

<sup>64</sup> The Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) replaced the GED as New York State's primary high school equivalency test in January 2014.



instruction—as a promising strategy for accelerating this process and improving program completion for Spanish-speaking LEP individuals.<sup>65</sup>

For instance, Union Settlement Association, one of the New York City DYCD-funded adult education providers, offers HSE content courses in both English and Spanish for DACA applicants. Students preparing to take the Spanish version of the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) receive Spanish-language instruction in five subject areas—reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science—in conjunction with ESL. In New York State, individuals passing the Spanish version of the TASC receive the same HSE diploma as those who take the exam in English. Most of the students who enroll in Spanish-language programs have a 6th - or 7th-grade level of education and approximately 90 percent are male. This gender distribution is notable, given that lower-educated young men are often considered particularly hard to reach by service providers, and males were under-represented among DACA applicants during the program’s first year.<sup>66</sup> To accommodate working students with various schedules, Union Settlement offers classes in the morning, afternoon, evening, and on Saturdays.

In Atlanta, the Catholic organization Centro Hispano Marista began offering Spanish and English GED preparation classes as part of an effort to increase educational and faith-based services to unauthorized immigrants in the Atlanta area after House Bill 2, enacted in 2010, banned unauthorized immigrants from enrolling in publicly funded adult education programs.<sup>67</sup> Centro Hispano Marista’s GED program began in 2012, unintentionally coinciding with the DACA announcement, and soon reached an enrollment of 1,200 students due to demand that was much higher than expected. The center attracts students from various locations, as it is reportedly the only Spanish-language GED preparation program in the Atlanta metro area, and one of only a few nonprofit adult education providers to serve unauthorized immigrants.

In several regions, interviewees reported a need for more Spanish-language HSE programs. The shortage of such programs is due in part to a federal restriction on the use of adult secondary education funds for instruction in languages other than English, along with state funding restrictions in many states.<sup>68</sup> In New York City, local public funds can be used for Spanish-language instruction, but demand for these programs far exceeds supply, with an interviewee reporting a waiting list of roughly 500 people for one such program.

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*In many states and cities, the boundary between adult education and college-level courses can be difficult to cross.*

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### 3. Bridge Programs and Integrated Instruction Linking ESL/Adult Education to College Credit

In many states and cities, the boundary between adult education and college-level courses can be difficult to cross, even for individuals at advanced levels of ASE and ESL instruction. Most federal and state-funded adult education programs do not extend to the advanced levels of ESL required for college preparation, and within local community college systems there often remains a sharp division between noncredit and credit-based instruction. Cost also poses a substantial barrier for many DACA youth looking to make this

65 Nationwide, the overwhelming majority of individuals who do not meet DACA’s education requirements but are otherwise eligible are from Spanish-speaking countries. Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*. While there are number of other widely used languages spoken by potentially eligible individuals in New York City, the TASC exam is offered only in English and Spanish.

66 Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*.

67 Georgia General Assembly, House Bill 2, 151st General Assembly (January 1, 2010), [www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20092010/96748.pdf](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20092010/96748.pdf). Implementation of this policy, as it applies to adult education, has fluctuated. In 2012, the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) suspended the legal status requirement for enrollment in adult education, but this requirement was reinstated as of January 2013.

68 *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* (AEFLA).



transition: noncredit courses are typically free or low-cost, while college-level courses charge full tuition.

Nationwide, a number of innovative program models, including so-called bridge programs, have emerged to help adult education students accelerate the process of learning ESL and basic skills while also making a transition to college. At the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), for instance, the Adult Education Career Bridge Program links noncredit GED preparation with a college-level course that counts toward a career certificate in a student's chosen field, such as health care, manufacturing, or information technology. For DACA youth, this means that students can enroll in a program that satisfies DACA education requirements while also pursuing an industry-recognized certificate in a high-growth field. The entire bridge program, including the college-level course, is free, but participants must be able to commit to 20 hours of instruction a week and must have a 6th- to 9th-grade reading level in English.

Following on the success of the bridge program model, CCC has developed the Gateway to the City Colleges of Chicago program serving students at the higher levels of adult education (those who have at least a 9th-grade reading level in English or are in one of the highest levels of ESL instruction). This program allows students to participate in dual enrollment, simultaneously taking both adult education and college courses tuition free, while also receiving college advising from transition specialists. Notably, CCC advertises the Gateway Program on its Undocumented Student Resources webpage and clarifies that all adult education students are eligible, regardless of immigration status. Gateway and the Career Bridge Program can provide a significant cost savings for DACA grantees and unauthorized immigrants moving from adult education into college. More broadly, these programs reflect CCC systemwide reform strategies of enhancing the relevance of instruction, reducing the amount of time it takes to complete a degree or certificate, and increasing student supports by establishing "Guided Pathways to Success"—clear educational plans that map out the fastest sequence of noncredit and credit-based courses needed to achieve one's career goals.<sup>69</sup>

Among other fieldwork sites, community colleges in Maryland<sup>70</sup> and Texas<sup>71</sup> offer similar adult education programs based on Washington State's nationally renowned and rigorously evaluated Integrated Basic Skills and Training (I-BEST) model. I-BEST uses a co-teaching approach: students take classes that are jointly designed and co-taught by adult education faculty and workforce development faculty, and also receive wraparound support services. These adult education reform efforts, while not designed explicitly for DACA youth, can be especially beneficial for this population.

#### 4. Newer/Pilot Programs Focusing on Pathways to WIOA-Funded Career-Training Programs

At the inception of the DACA program, it was initially unclear whether DACA grantees were eligible for career-training programs funded under Title I of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA).<sup>72</sup> These programs, administered by local One Stop Centers and overseen by local workforce boards, provide training accounts for eligible individuals—who must have legal employment authorization—to cover tuition in short-term courses offered by eligible providers, including local community colleges and CBOs. On July 14, 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration issued a Training and Guidance letter clarifying that under WIOA nondiscrimination provisions, DACA grantees who have employment authorization are eligible for WIOA Title I and *Wagner-Peyser Act* programs.<sup>73</sup>

69 City Colleges of Chicago, *Five Year Plan: Strategic Initiatives and Objectives, 2013-2018* (Chicago: City Colleges of Chicago, 2014), [www.ccc.edu/Documents/city%20colleges%20of%20chicago\\_5-year%20plan\\_2013-2018.pdf](http://www.ccc.edu/Documents/city%20colleges%20of%20chicago_5-year%20plan_2013-2018.pdf).

70 Annie E. Casey Foundation, "The Maryland Integrated Education and Skills Training Program (MI-BEST)" (presentation at the Maryland Association of Community Colleges Conference, Community College of Baltimore County [CCBC], Catonsville, MD, December 2, 2012), [www.mdacc.org/PDFs/Completion%20Summit/2012\\_Summit/WS24\\_MACC\\_MI\\_BEST\\_12\\_6\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mdacc.org/PDFs/Completion%20Summit/2012_Summit/WS24_MACC_MI_BEST_12_6_2012.pdf).

71 Alamo Colleges, "Information for the Public," accessed November 20, 2014, [www.alamo.edu/main.aspx?id=9599](http://www.alamo.edu/main.aspx?id=9599); see also Jill Casner-Latto, *Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community Colleges Strategies for Success* (New York City: Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, 2011), [www.cccie.org/images/stories/Increasing\\_Opportunities\\_for\\_Immigrant\\_Students\\_2011.pdf](http://www.cccie.org/images/stories/Increasing_Opportunities_for_Immigrant_Students_2011.pdf).

72 Formerly WIA.

73 U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 02-14," updated July 14, 2014, [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=7233](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=7233).





A few workforce development organizations have recently launched pilot programs that provide pathways from ESL or basic skills instruction into WIOA-funded career training for DACA youth. These programs, targeting lower-educated immigrants who do not meet DACA education requirements, are intended to appeal to working learners who are interested in short-term training programs offering marketable skills as opposed to a diploma or degree pathway. Such efforts to broaden the reach of WIOA Title I training dollars are notable, given that adults with limited English proficiency are significantly under-represented among those receiving Title I services nationwide.<sup>74</sup>

In California, Building Skills Partnership (BSP) provides immigrant janitors and other service workers with worksite-based ESL instruction, along with wraparound support and programming for their families. Recognizing that many BSP participants come from mixed-status families, BSP expanded its curriculum to include DACA-eligible individuals. Through a new pilot program, BSP intends to help a cohort of DACA-eligible individuals earn a GED, apply for DACA, and transition to a WIOA-funded workforce training program after receiving DACA. These steps will be coordinated seamlessly through BSP and its partner organizations providing immigration legal services.

Similarly, in California's Central Valley, the career-training organization Proteus, Inc. has developed a pilot program to help DACA-eligible individuals take advantage of WIOA Title I programs. The goal of the pilot program is to serve the potentially eligible population that has yet to apply for DACA. The Proteus pilot program will offer ESL classes using a curriculum that includes lessons about the workplace, job readiness, and an overview of new opportunities available for unauthorized immigrants to earn a California driver's license under Assembly Bill 60.<sup>75</sup> Other services that will be provided include individual tutoring, child care, and transportation cost assistance. Upon completing the program and receiving DACA, Proteus intends to enroll participants in career training for occupations such as truck driving and solar panel installation. The Proteus pilot program is part of broader efforts supported by several local foundations to use DACA to engage the Central Valley's relatively low-skilled migrant farmworker community in education and training that will lead to higher-wage jobs.<sup>76</sup>

Though they represent innovative program models for large and underserved groups, the Proteus and BSP pilot programs will serve a modest number of individuals, at least initially—an estimated 30 participants for Proteus and 25 participants for BSP—and both rely on grants from private foundations.

## B. Additional Challenges

Many of the innovative programs and local initiatives described in this section represent attempts to leverage DACA incentives for adult education enrollment and help adult learners advance on a pathway to a GED or high school equivalency diploma, higher English proficiency, postsecondary education, and greater career opportunities. These important efforts notwithstanding, relatively weak DACA education requirements, coupled with significant constraints in adult education program access and capacity, have limited the scale of progress made by potential DACA recipients in their education and career trajectories.

### I. Capacity Constraints

Interviewees in most fieldwork regions reported significant program capacity constraints related to limited funding. This issue is particularly salient in California—home to the largest number of DACA-eligible youth—as the recent state budget crisis eroded its historically robust system of local adult schools that for decades had played an important role in immigrant integration. In 2009, the state Legislature allowed

<sup>74</sup> Chhandasi Pandya, "Limited English Proficient Workers and Workforce Investment Act Challenges and Opportunities," *Migration Information Source*, July 2012, [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-workers-and-workforce-investment-act-challenges-and-opportunities](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-workers-and-workforce-investment-act-challenges-and-opportunities).

<sup>75</sup> California State Assembly, Assembly Bill 60, 2013 State Assembly (October 3, 2013), <http://legiscan.com/CA/bill/AB60/2013>.

<sup>76</sup> Ed Kissam, "Deferred Action (DACA): A First Step Towards Lifelong Learning and Career Advancement," (presentation, National ID&R Forum, Tampa, FL, October 2, 2013), <http://escort.org/sites/default/files/B4-Kissam-Using-Info-Sources-DACA.pdf>.





school districts to redirect state funds from adult education in order to protect their K-12 instructional programs, resulting in dramatic program reductions and outright closures of adult schools in many regions.<sup>77</sup> Institutions across the state reported that they have still not recovered from the budget crisis and lack resources to reduce their lengthy waiting lists, let alone to fund staff training time related to DACA or provide guidance for DACA youth.

On a related note, insufficient capacity in the public adult education system may have fueled the proliferation of nonaccredited—and sometimes fraudulent—providers. Nationwide, reports of diploma mills offering false claims of providing GED or HSE instruction, often online, surfaced in the months following the DACA announcement; concerns regarding such abuses were echoed across fieldwork sites. Such cases led USCIS to reject certain applicants or send Requests for Evidence to individuals listing online institutions on their DACA applications.

Finally, the demand for adult education courses by prospective DACA applicants is likely to only increase given the president’s removal of the age ceiling as part of the executive actions announced in November 2014.<sup>78</sup> This large new group of older, potentially eligible DACA individuals includes many who have been out of school for many years and who may have low underlying levels of education. However, some of these new prospective applicants also qualify for the newly created Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program. Since this program does not include an education requirement, those who lack a high school diploma and are eligible for both programs would likely choose DAPA.

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*Insufficient capacity in the public adult education system may have fueled the proliferation of nonaccredited—and sometimes fraudulent—providers.*

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## 2. The Role of State Policy: Legal Status Barriers to Adult Education

In adult education as well as other levels of the public education system, state policies continue to play a significant role in limiting program access. Arizona and Georgia are the only two states to bar enrollment in publicly funded adult education courses for unauthorized immigrants—closing an important door to DACA eligibility for those who need to enroll in a qualified program. In the Atlanta area, interviewees report that only two nonprofit adult education providers accept unauthorized immigrants. Both of these programs saw sharp increases in demand from young adults interested in applying for DACA, and one of them maintains a constant waiting list. They both receive referrals from the entire state. Transportation was cited as a substantial barrier to participation for many students, in part because unauthorized immigrants in Georgia are unable to obtain a driver’s license, and students’ public transportation options were reported to be limited.

### C. Takeaways at the Adult Education Level

#### 1. *Municipal-level responses to DACA that bolster adult education services and connect these programs to immigration legal service providers and other community stakeholders have*

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77 Little Hoover Commission, *Serving Students, Serving California* (Sacramento, CA: Little Hoover Commission, 2012), [www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/210/report210.html](http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/210/report210.html). For more information, see Hooker, McHugh, and Fix, *Critical Choices in Post-Recession California*.

78 DACA originally required applicants to be born before June 15, 1981, but the maximum age limit was lifted as part of the executive actions announced by President Obama in November 2014. DACA applicants still must have resided continuously in the United States since before their 16th birthday. See DHS, “Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion.”



- the potential to improve service navigation and access for lower-educated youth, and aid them in applying for DACA and advancing their education.* Though many municipalities may be unable to provide substantial new investments to expand and coordinate DACA-related services, low-cost elements of the initiative undertaken in New York City can be applied in other contexts. For example, other cities can create a coordinated referral system linking adult education and legal service providers, or provide information about DACA to adult education students through informational presentations and videos.
2. *Spanish-language instruction has proven to be an effective program option for many DACA youth with limited English proficiency—but such programs are in short supply, with federal funding restrictions limiting the provision of this high-demand service.* According to interviewees, many students want to complete a GED or high school equivalency diploma, either to satisfy employer requirements or to enroll in postsecondary education; however, they would need several years to build the English skills needed to pass these tests. Spanish-language GED and high school equivalency programs, combined with ESL instruction, provide an effective and time-saving alternative for this group. Several interviewees highlighted the inconsistency in state and federal policies that allow students to earn a GED or high school equivalency diploma in Spanish, but do not fund adult education courses in this language. This restriction prevents a significant number of adults from moving forward on education and career pathways.
  3. *Strategies that aim to accelerate students' progress from adult education into college-level certificate and degree programs—including bridge programs and I-BEST—can offer a significant savings of time and money for DACA youth.* These models represent examples of strategies that are designed for a broader student population, but offer important solutions to some of the barriers facing DACA youth. For instance, programs that include free college courses for adult education students help DACA youth overcome the affordability hurdle they are likely to face as they make the transition from noncredit to credit-bearing courses. Following the example of the City Colleges of Chicago, institutions can advertise these programs to their DACA students and ensure that they are eligible for full participation.
  4. *Career-focused programs provide an important alternative to traditional adult education courses, and may have more success in engaging harder-to-reach members of the DACA population: those who are older and have significant gaps in their education. These programs can launch DACA grantees into higher-paying jobs.* In California, Proteus and Building Skills Partnership have recently designed pilot programs based on this premise, with the goal of providing a pathway into WIOA-funded career training for DACA youth. For unauthorized immigrants, the economic benefits of receiving legal work authorization through DACA along with industry-recognized credential in a field such as transportation or solar energy could be substantial.
  5. *Capacity constraints in the adult education system continue to impede the participation of lower-educated adults seeking to apply for DACA.* The efforts of adult education programs to respond to the needs of DACA youth are constrained by a lack of funding to meet the needs of these and other adult learners in their community. Such challenges will likely be compounded by increased demand from adults who were previously too old for DACA but could now become eligible under the expanded program rules. Local service delivery systems also lack the resources to provide sufficient counseling for DACA applicants about the various program options that would both satisfy DACA requirements and help them advance their own educational and career goals—a valuable but missed opportunity for cities and states seeking to improve the educational attainment and skills of their workforce.



## V. Legal Services

Since understanding the implications of the DACA program for a given individual can involve complex questions of immigration law, it is not surprising that attorneys and organizations providing immigration-related outreach, legal advice, and application assistance have played a central role in responding to the needs of potential applicants. The individuals and entities that provide these services also have a strategically important gatekeeping role for DACA youth who need to enroll in a qualified education or training program.

Our fieldwork explored the nature and scope of DACA legal outreach and application assistance in each site, and sought specifically to explore communication or collaboration occurring across legal service initiatives and education programs or institutions, with an eye to efforts with potential to support the educational success of DACA youth. Accordingly, this section begins by describing key elements of the legal services infrastructure created to respond to DACA, and then discusses some of the challenges and successes actors in the legal service and education fields experienced as they attempted—either alone or in collaboration—to serve potential DACA applicants and promote their educational success.

### A. Key Actors and Stages in the Legal Service Response

When USCIS began accepting DACA applications in August 2012, many legal service providers sought to meet pent-up demand from the large number of youth eager to apply for the program’s protections. In cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago, legal service providers hosted DACA “mega workshops”<sup>79</sup>—large-scale, volunteer driven clinics—to assist large numbers of unauthorized immigrants complete their DACA application. Members of local bar associations and the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) along with affiliates of national legal service groups such as Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) often collaborated with immigrant organizations, elected officials, and media outlets to make these events a success. These mega workshops served as many as 300-400 individuals<sup>80</sup> per day, and were widely recognized as effective in helping younger—and often more academically successful and socially networked—unauthorized youth apply for DACA.

Trusted immigrant-led organizations in several fieldwork sites also took action immediately after the program’s launch to organize information and application assistance clinics serving smaller but significant numbers of individuals on a more regular basis. For instance, during the first three months of DACA, the Central American Solidarity Association of Maryland, Inc. (CASA de Maryland) disseminated information about the program to its large member network and other stakeholders such as consulates, high schools, and community colleges. These outreach efforts directed potentially eligible individuals to the three legal clinics per week the organization hosted; roughly 300-400 DACA applicants were served per clinic.

Similarly, the Immigration and Legal Services unit of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Dallas reached thousands of individuals through outreach and information events after DACA was first announced, and ultimately helped more than 2,000 individuals apply. And in Los Angeles, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)—working largely through a newly created legal department and trained pro bono attorneys—processed several thousand applications through their legal clinics and an offsite mobile unit program, placing a special emphasis on screening potential applicants to determine if they might be eligible for other immigration benefits. In each of the large metropolitan areas included in this study, provision of legal services to potential applicants through regularly scheduled legal clinics or workshops during DACA’s first six to 12 months was a standard baseline practice among nonprofit or pro

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<sup>79</sup> Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), “Mega Workshop Training Curriculum” (North Hills, CA: CLINIC, 2012), <https://cliniclegal.org/sites/default/files/Mega%20Workshop%20Training%20Curriculum%202011-16-12.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> Based on numbers served at workshops organized by CASA de Maryland. Information on file with authors.



bono legal service providers and their community partners.

With the initial goal and function of most legal service efforts centered on large-scale processing of DACA applicants, interviewees noted that harder-to-reach populations, such as LEP and/or older DACA-eligible individuals, often experienced difficulties learning about the program and identifying qualifying education programs to enroll in. In response, leading legal service providers and unauthorized youth organizations established the Own the Dream campaign in August 2012,<sup>81</sup> seeking to better coordinate application assistance efforts and reach harder-to-serve individuals.<sup>82</sup> Interviewees in several fieldwork sites reported that these more coordinated efforts resulted in a better leveraging of resources and helped to make legal service support more visible and available to potential DACA applicants in their region.

## B. Ongoing Efforts and Harder-to-Reach Populations

By the end of the first year of the DACA program, 567,563 applications<sup>83</sup> had been received by USCIS, and by the end of the second year initial (first-time) applications had reached 681,189.<sup>84</sup> Even before President Obama's recent announcement of a broader set of executive actions, legal service providers remained focused on DACA implementation due to service demands from prior applicants who were required to renew their status after two years, as well as individuals aging into program eligibility and those who had not yet applied. The same providers are now engaged in preparing for an anticipated surge in demand due to the implementation of deferred action for additional categories of individuals, including parents of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents.

Despite the scope of the legal services infrastructure created to support DACA applicants, interviewees in each site reported capacity challenges, particularly in Georgia and rural areas of California, Texas, and Florida. The lack of legal services in some areas reportedly led to a greater prevalence of incompetent and fraudulent providers who take advantage of potential DACA applicants' limited knowledge of U.S. law, lack of English fluency, and lack of cultural knowledge. Indeed, since the launch of the DACA program, legal service providers and community partners in each of the sites studied reported sharing a common goal of combating exploitation of potential applicants by *notarios*—individuals who lack a license to provide legal services and may be preying on immigrants with false promises of residency and citizenship.

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Throughout the two-plus years of DACA, another issue widely cited by legal service providers—and confirmed in USCIS program statistics—is the difficulty of engaging with DACA-eligible individuals in Asian communities. Interviewees reported that issues of fear and shame regarding unauthorized immigration status are especially prevalent in many Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, deterring many potentially eligible individuals from applying. Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles (AAAJ-LA), which is part of the national AAPI DACA Collaborative, is recognized for producing multilingual outreach materials and other resources to reach potential DACA applicants from

81 National Immigration Law Center (NILC), “As Deferred Action Becomes DREAMers’ Reality, National Immigration Law Center Joins New Campaign to Help Thousands of Immigrants Who Arrived As Children,” accessed November 20, 2014, [www.nilc.org/nr080712.html](http://www.nilc.org/nr080712.html).

82 We Own the Dream, “About,” accessed November 20, 2014, [www.weownthedream.org/about/](http://www.weownthedream.org/about/).

83 USCIS, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process,” date range, August 15, 2012 – August 31, 2013, reported September 11, 2013, [www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca-13-9-11.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca-13-9-11.pdf).

84 Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*.



a range of Asian countries. In Georgia, the Asian American Legal Advocacy Center (AALAC)—the first nonprofit law center in the Southeast focused on AAPIs—also fills a critical need for legal advisement in Asian languages. AALAC has partnered with Korean churches in the Atlanta area to host DACA application clinics; interviewees reported that these clinics did not draw as many people as the organizations had anticipated, with many clients preferring to seek assistance by phone. Despite efforts by AAAJ-LA, AALAC, and other AAPI-serving groups, application rates among Asian immigrants continue to remain low.<sup>85</sup>

Outreach in rural communities also has proven challenging. The Central Valley DACA Collaborative, a project of the San Francisco-based Immigrant Legal Resource Center, conducts a range of targeted efforts seeking to provide DACA-related services to agricultural workers in California’s Central Valley region. Yet, despite its efforts, interviewees report that many DACA-eligible individuals in this region have yet to apply.

Efforts by Mexican consulates were recognized in nearly all sites as critical to the success of legal outreach and assistance efforts. Given the high visibility of the consulates in local communities and their role as trusted providers of government information and legal documents, many service groups sought to partner with consulates to improve the reach of their efforts. Consulates have undertaken a variety of site-specific efforts to address particular needs of their community. For example, the Mexican consulate in Sacramento, working with a local community partner, recently raised \$90,000 to help cover application fees for first-time DACA applicants. This initiative was undertaken to remove the barrier that the \$465 DACA application fee poses to low-wage workers in the consulate’s jurisdiction, many of whom live in rural areas and are agricultural workers.

### **C. Collaboration and Coordination between Legal Service Providers and Educational Institutions**

Our field research identified several efforts involving either voluntary collaboration or more formal coordination among legal service providers, education institutions, and other major stakeholders involved in DACA implementation. Though most of these efforts were not created with the intent to promote the educational advancement of DACA youth, they provide some lessons for improving collaboration and coordination for this purpose across these two important fields.

#### **I. Legal Service and Education Institution Collaboration**

As noted earlier, many legal service providers and immigrant-serving organizations focused their early implementation efforts on broad-based outreach, public education, and application processing. As they evaluated the results of these efforts, some reported identifying gaps and missed opportunities with stakeholders who were not well integrated in early efforts—among them, key local education institutions.

In Los Angeles, the California Community Foundation (CCF), a large local foundation with a respected record of leading immigrant integration and community development initiatives, has played a convening and coordinating role with leading local groups that are responding to the needs of potential DACA applicants. CCF provided early support to 15 community, legal service, and unauthorized youth-led organizations and subsequently formed the DACA 100 Taskforce to promote communication and coordination across local efforts.

Seeing an opportunity to improve DACA outreach and services for parents and youth in Los Angeles schools, representatives of the Los Angeles Unified School District School Board were invited to participate in the task force. Members of the task force organized 11 school-based DACA clinics and information sessions over the past year and have planned an additional ten for 2014-15. Extensive

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.





outreach is conducted for each event, including sending packets of information about DACA home with students, and passing out flyers at school dropoff and pickup locations. These efforts are primarily focused on parents of elementary school students, many of whom are thought to be eligible to apply for DACA protections. This strategy could also be adapted to support implementation of the new DAPA program, as many parents of students in grades K-12 will be able to apply for relief when this program begins in 2015.

In areas like the Central Valley, creating partnerships to improve legal service or education access for DACA youth is arguably of even greater importance given the short supply of services and great distance individuals often must travel to access them. The Central Valley DACA Collaborative was created to respond to these challenges, providing funding for outreach organizations<sup>86</sup> and forming partnerships with educational institutions such as the Fresno Unified School District and Fresno Adult School in order to increase knowledge about DACA and DACA applicants' needs among school administrators. The collaborative also formed partnerships with the Mexican Consulate in Sacramento and a range of community groups in order to meet the needs of harder-to-reach agricultural workers. In addition to providing expert information and training on DACA to participating institutions, collaborative members work together to publicize DACA information sessions and legal clinics and to help applicants who lack a high school diploma or equivalent identify adult education programs they might enroll in to meet DACA requirements.

Similar to the cross-institution partnerships in Fresno and Los Angeles, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) "Key to the City" initiative builds on partnerships with several Latin American consulates and the New York City Department of Education. As part of this initiative NYIC collaborates with schools, community partners, and consulates<sup>87</sup> to organize popular school-based events, through which immigrant parents can apply for consular IDs, passports, and now DACA, while also receiving a range of other education-related information, including workshops on college access and affordability issues.

These several efforts point to opportunities for better leveraging the outreach capacity of schools and the hook that immigration-related legal services can provide in attracting immigrant parents to school-based events, as well as the important role of schools as sources of information on immigration relief options—including DACA and DAPA. Unfortunately, however, even these laudable efforts appear to miss opportunities to counsel adult immigrants about how they might advance their education and training, and the benefits of doing so.

The only initiative encountered in our fieldwork that required direct coordination and referrals between legal service providers and education programs was New York City's large-scale DACA initiative. As described earlier, the initiative involves contracts with 60 organizations,<sup>88</sup> each providing outreach, adult education, or legal services; these groups provide referrals to potential DACA applicants to support them in accessing free legal services and adult education classes. It also provides significant funding to CUNY for legal clinics, adult education programs, and professional development for adult ESL instructors citywide.

The initiative is remarkable for its scope and its focus on the needs of potential DACA applicants who do not meet program education requirements. Nevertheless, like the examples of collaborative efforts, this effort also does not provide navigation support for DACA applicants who often need individualized advice to find an education program that meets their needs and interests.

<sup>86</sup> The three community-based organizations receiving mini-grants from the Central Valley DACA Collaborative were: El Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (Binational Center for the Development of Indigenous Communities), the Education and Leadership Foundation's Deferred Action Help Center, and Fresno Immigrant Youth in Action.

<sup>87</sup> Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.

<sup>88</sup> DACA NYC, "For Immigrants," accessed November 20, 2014, [www.dacanyc.org/immigrants/](http://www.dacanyc.org/immigrants/).



## 2. The Role of Law School Clinics

While efforts by law school clinics to provide outreach and application assistance to DACA youth may not necessarily or directly promote the educational advancement of these youth, they are included here since in several of the sites studied law school clinical programs were reported to have played a particularly important leadership role in broader community responses to DACA.

For instance, in Texas, the San Antonio-based St. Mary's University School of Law played a high-profile role in DACA implementation, providing extensive outreach at churches, high schools, and through local community organizations, and offering individual representation to DACA applicants through its offices in San Antonio and Laredo. In Miami, the law school at Florida International University (FIU) similarly extended its clinic services to include DACA assistance and joined with the University of Miami Law School and other legal service and youth-led groups to provide a coordinated response to legal service demands touched off by the DACA announcement. The FIU clinical program hosted the coordinated effort, and tapping into a range of partners the network was able to provide free legal services to almost 2,000 individuals, along with DACA application fee assistance for many applicants who could not afford the cost.

Both the Florida and Texas law school efforts recognized unmet needs in rural and other underserved areas of their states, organizing DACA clinics far beyond their campus walls. For example, students from the University of Miami Law School and FIU Law School traveled to northern and central Florida to conduct outreach and DACA clinics as part of an alternative Spring Break.

As in other DACA-response efforts described in this report, youth organizations played a central role in supporting legal service response efforts. For example, the youth-led advocacy coalition FL DREAM served as a key partner in the efforts involving the FIU and University of Miami law schools, informing youth about DACA requirements and connecting them to the legal clinics. Their work has also evolved to support high school students who have been granted DACA to identify financial resources that will help them afford college.

Notably, as the DACA program heads into its third year, the clinics at St. Mary's, FIU, and many other law schools continue to provide legal help to initial and renewal DACA applicants.

### D. Additional Challenges

The immigration legal service field and its community and youth organization partners overcame significant challenges during the first two years of DACA, responding quickly to the program's announcement and ultimately creating a robust infrastructure of information and application assistance services in many parts of the United States. Several broad challenges remain, however, for those who seek to make the most of available opportunities to support the longer-term education and career success of potential DACA applicants.

#### 1. Lack of Understanding among Legal Service Providers Regarding Implications of DACA Education Requirements

Given DACA education requirements, success for hundreds of thousands of potential applicants was tied to their ability to enroll in a qualifying education program. Unsurprisingly, providing adequate support to clients so that they fulfill this requirement has presented a difficult and unusual challenge for legal service providers. Initially the program's education requirements appeared to be clear based on a plain language interpretation of the USCIS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that were published with detailed information on program requirements and processes.<sup>89</sup> In response, some legal service providers created lists of local adult education and GED programs, assuming they would fulfill the DACA education

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<sup>89</sup> USCIS, "Frequently Asked Questions."



requirement; in some cases they also recommended that applicants use a search tool sponsored by a contractor to the U.S. Department of Education to identify a local ABE, ASE, or ESL program.<sup>90</sup>

However, it soon became clear that the FAQs left many questions unresolved related to qualifying programs. Interviewees reported that this confusion, coupled with the lack of available program seats in local systems and the inability of most legal service providers to understand the education needs of their clients and make an effective referral, led to fairly ineffective referral practices for many applicants requiring adult education or training services. Though USCIS issued updated FAQs on June 5, 2014 that helped to clarify program qualification guidelines, the inability of lawyers to make effective program referrals remains a problem without an easy solution. The training needs of lawyers who step forward to support clinic initiatives are already quite high, and there are no ready guides or resources to which potential applicants can be referred to find a program tailored to their needs and interests. Even when legal service providers had a standardized referral list with adult education programs, our fieldwork found that, in some cases, these lists used were outdated or did not cover the full range of programs available.

## 2. Reluctance of Some School Districts to Partner with Legal Service Groups

Interviewees also reported that schools or school districts in their state had barred or restricted access to schools by legal service providers and community-based organizations seeking to provide DACA outreach and information sessions. Upon closer examination, some access concerns appeared to result from lengthy and sometimes complex school security and event approval procedures. Others, however, appeared to result from issues such as discomfort in sponsoring an event on a controversial topic, uncertainty among school staff about the reputation and qualifications of requesting organizations, and concerns that such events, in revealing some students' unauthorized status, might violate district, state, or even federal laws designed to protect students' right to access public elementary and secondary schools.

The initiatives undertaken by the DACA 100 Taskforce in Los Angeles and Keys to the City project in New York demonstrate the benefit of trusted intermediaries in helping schools and school districts have confidence in the quality of information and professional standards of such events. As discussed earlier, outreach support or direction from USCIS and the U.S. Department of Education can also help to improve schools' level of comfort in organizing DACA-related information and application assistance events.

## E. Takeaways at the Legal Services Level

Naturally, the primary purpose of DACA legal service efforts is to meet the enormous demand by potentially eligible youth for legal advice and application assistance. Nevertheless, given the significant size and scope of the legal service infrastructure in many communities, stakeholders have sought to leverage this service delivery system to help meet other key needs of applicants. Our field research sought to identify actions taken by legal service providers to support the education and career success of DACA youth. While such efforts were not widespread, useful lessons can be drawn from the difficulties they faced and successes they experienced.

- 1. Collaboration and coordination across legal service and education programs are essential to leverage the strengths of existing service infrastructures in local communities; however, the effectiveness of such efforts is often undercut by a lack of navigation assistance for adult education and training programs, which is necessary to match the needs and goals of adult learners to local programs that can best serve them.** Existing efforts that create collaboration around DACA across legal service providers and education institutions are innovative and laudable, yet even they appear to miss opportunities to provide sufficient information to potential applicants about opportunities to advance their education and skills

<sup>90</sup> Literacy Information and Communication System, "LINCS Homepage," accessed November 25, 2014, <http://lincs.ed.gov/>.



training, and the benefits of doing so. This may be due to the fact that local education and training program offerings defy easy mapping: their services are usually not aligned, and few offer integrated services to simultaneously meet the education, training, and language learning needs of immigrants. Though these challenges represent broader adult education system reform issues, efforts to map relevant offerings for potential DACA applicants could help provide a template for improved system alignment and transparent career pathways for all students. Even without this type of alignment, student assessment and navigation supports could be added to existing partnerships between legal service providers and adult education providers.

2. ***Legal service entities and lawyers need assistance providing referrals to education and training programs for DACA applicants, along with other system navigation supports, since in most cases it is unrealistic to expect that attorneys will be able to effectively advise clients on how best to meet their adult education and training needs.*** Efforts to map existing education and training offerings in local communities and/or create navigation support for those seeking to access such programs are needed in order to leverage the strengths of the legal services infrastructure that assists potential DACA applicants. Intermediary organizations, along with local government agencies and funders, could play a valuable role in creating accessible and up-to-date guides to adult education programs for various student profiles.
3. ***Many schools and school districts would benefit from clearer guidance regarding the DACA program and their ability to share pertinent information about its provisions without running afoul of student privacy regulations.*** Just as attorneys and legal service providers are not well equipped to assist DACA youth needing education navigation support, education institutions feel out of their depth when asked to address issues in the immigration law field or navigate amongst its many local actors who may seek to collaborate with them. Federal and state agencies can help to inform school deliberations regarding their potential roles in DACA outreach and community collaborations, and other trusted local entities can partner with schools to address potential quality control and coordination concerns.

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*Educational institutions are uniquely well positioned to serve as outreach hubs and referral providers for both DACA and DAPA.*

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## VI. Conclusion

Implementation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which began in 2012, has depended on the combined efforts of a wide range of local actors, including legal service providers, educational institutions, municipal government agencies, immigrant youth-led organizations, consulates, and private foundations. All of these partners played a critical role in building the infrastructure needed to reach potentially eligible youth and help them apply for relief from deportation. In several cities, new collaboratives emerged with the goal of coordinating diffuse DACA-related efforts, increasing their visibility, and enhancing their collective impact. In many cases, these structures and initiatives may provide a foundation for responses to the executive actions announced by President Obama in November 2014—giving communities a head start in preparing for the spring 2015 implementation of the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program that could benefit up to 3.7 million unauthorized immigrants who have been in the United States five years or more and are parents of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> MPI, “As Many as 3.7 Million Unauthorized Immigrants Could Get Relief from Deportation.”



As demonstrated throughout this report, educational institutions are uniquely well positioned to serve as outreach hubs and referral providers for both DACA and DAPA, as they already have established relationships with unauthorized immigrant children and parents. In some regions, K-12 schools and institutions of higher education have hosted DACA application clinics or information sessions organized by legal service providers and volunteer attorneys, along with other partners. Immigrant youth have depended on these institutions to provide transcripts and other documents needed for their DACA applications. DACA requirements also carved a special role for adult education providers in helping lower-educated individuals qualify for protection.

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*Unauthorized immigrant students continue to face significant obstacles on the path to a postsecondary degree and a career paying a family-sustaining wage.*

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In addition to helping individuals secure relief from deportation, some of the initiatives described in this report focus on the long-term educational and career prospects of DACA youth. Common elements of promising programs included counseling, mentoring, support services, and efforts to accelerate student progress while reducing cost. Nonetheless, unauthorized immigrant students continue to face significant obstacles on the path to a postsecondary degree and a career paying a family-sustaining wage. Higher education opportunities vary considerably across states, due to differences in tuition and financial aid policies as well as underlying college costs. Interpreting the requirements of complex and frequently changing states policies can be challenging for students as well as college employees. For adult learners seeking to enroll in a program that matches their career goals, the task of navigating a complex, uncoordinated, and often oversubscribed local adult education system can be daunting.

While the immigration and education fields have distinct missions, they are also increasingly interdependent. Failing to build on these connections represents a missed opportunity to promote educational and labor market integration of an important subgroup of the youth population. As this report demonstrates, DACA has the potential to stimulate new alliances between public, private, and nonprofit actors who share a common interest in the civic engagement and human capital development of their local communities. Drawing lessons from initiatives already underway at the convergence of these fields, a wide range of institutions and government agencies can support the academic and career success of DACA youth and simultaneously advance regional, state, and national college completion and workforce training goals.

For more on MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, visit:

[www.migrationpolicy.org/integration](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/integration)





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## About the Authors



**Sarah Hooker** is a Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, where she focuses on research and policy analysis related to education, workforce development, and language acquisition. She manages MPI's field-based research on efforts to promote the high school completion, postsecondary success, and economic advancement of English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrant youth.

Prior to joining MPI, she worked with the American Youth Policy Forum on issues and policies related to college- and career readiness, education access, and success for students from under-represented groups. She focused on the education of ELLs and facilitated the dissemination of research and policy recommendations for better serving this population.

Ms. Hooker holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. While in graduate school, she provided capacity-building support to the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities. Prior to her work in Chicago, she developed a program to reconnect homeless parents with opportunities for continuing education and occupational training in Los Angeles. She earned a bachelor of the arts degree in Latin American studies from Pomona College in Claremont, CA.



**Margie McHugh** is Director of the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. The Center is a national hub for leaders in government, community affairs, business and academia to obtain the insights and knowledge they need to respond to the challenges and opportunities that today's high rates of immigration pose for communities across the United States. It provides in-depth research, policy analysis, technical assistance, training and information resource services on a broad range of immigrant integration issues.

Ms. McHugh's work focuses on education quality and access issues for immigrants and their children from early childhood through K-12 and adult, postsecondary and workforce skills programs. She also leads the Center's work seeking a more coordinated federal response to immigrant integration needs and impacts, and more workable systems for recognition of the education and work experience immigrants bring with them to the United States.

Prior to joining MPI, Ms. McHugh served for 15 years as Executive Director of The New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella organization for over 150 groups in New York that uses research, policy development, and community mobilization efforts to achieve landmark integration policy and program initiatives. During her time with NYIC, Ms. McHugh oversaw research, writing, and publication of over a dozen reports dealing with issues such as the quality of education services provided to immigrant students in New York's schools, the lack of availability of English classes for adult immigrants, the voting behavior of foreign-born citizens, and barriers faced by immigrants seeking to access health and mental health services.

Prior to joining NYIC, Ms. McHugh served as Deputy Director of New York City's 1990 Census Project and as Executive Assistant to New York Mayor Ed Koch's chief of staff. She is the recipient of dozens of awards recognizing her efforts to bring diverse constituencies together and tackle tough problems, including the prestigious Leadership for a Changing World award. She has served as a member and officer on the boards of directors for both the National Immigration Forum and Working Today; on the editorial board of *Migration World* Magazine; and has held appointive positions in a variety of New York city and state commissions, most notably the Commission on the Future of the City University of New York and the New York Workers' Rights Board.

Ms. McHugh is a graduate of Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges.





**Angelo Mathay** is an Associate Policy Analyst with MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, where he works on adult education, workforce training, and postsecondary education issues.

Previously, Mr. Mathay worked at the National Immigration Law Center as a DACA Law Fellow, where he connected DREAMers to legal service providers, developed models for providing legal services to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applicants, and conducted administrative advocacy regarding DACA implementation.

During law school, he clerked for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (Los Angeles and San Francisco office), Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Department of Justice, Executive Office of Immigration Review, and Judge Harry Pregerson of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He also served as co-editor-in-chief of the *Asian Pacific American Law Journal* and as a member of LEAD (formerly the Diversity Task Force).

Mr. Mathay earned his B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles and his J.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law (Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy Specialization).



The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

1400 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 001 202-266-1940  
Fax: 001 202-266-1900

