On October 20, 2015, the Department of Education published a Resource Guide on Supporting Undocumented Youth. According to this report, undocumented students represent one of the most vulnerable groups served by United States Schools. Estimates indicate that 80,000 undocumented youth turn 18 and approximately 65,000 graduate from high school every year. Yet only 5 to 10 percent of the high school graduates continue their education, mostly due to college and scholarship residency requirements that exclude students with undocumented status. Furthermore, these students do not have the right to work in the United States. To cope with this inequity and the lack of any immigration reform legislation, President Barack Obama issued an executive order in 2012 to implement the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) policy, which allowed youth who were brought to the United States as children and who meet the criteria below to request consideration for deferred action or the right to live, go to school, and work in the United States for an initial two-year period without being deported. An individual could request consideration for DACA if he or she:

- Was under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
- Came to the U.S. before reaching the age of 16 years old
- Has continuously resided in the U.S. since June, 2007
- Was physically present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012 and at the time of applying for DACA.
- Had no legal status as of June 15, 2012;
- Was currently in school, or graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from a high school or a high school equivalency certificate or was an honorably discharged veteran and
- Has not been convicted of a felony or significant misdemeanor and does not pose a threat to national security.

Upon receiving DACA status, students can live in the United States legally, attend higher educational institutions, and legally work in the United States. This population of immigrants has become known as the “Dreamers.”

On November 20, 2014, the Secretary of Homeland Security issued a memorandum expanding the guidelines for DACA to be effective until Feb. 18, 2015. However, on September 5, 2017, President Trump ordered an end to the program that shielded DACA applicants from deportation, to be effective 6 months following his announcement, or in March 2017. Instead he urged Congress to pass a replacement for this program, but so far, no action has been taken by the Congress.

Of the approximately 800,000 young people who have applied for DACA in the United States, approximately 30% of the total reside in California. According to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, if the program is terminated, more than 800,000 DACA applicants will be adversely impacted. “If they are deported, it would cost over $60 billion in lost tax revenue as well as reduced economic growth across the country of $280 billion over the next 10 years.”

Organizations across the country, including TESOL and the National Association of Colleges and Employers, have sent position papers advocating for the continuance of the DACA program until a permanent solution for the Dreamers is enacted, which would allow them to pursue a pathway toward permanent legal residency and United States Citizenship.

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