

Increasing DACA Participation

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President Obama’s recent executive action establishing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program offers hope for many undocumented residents of California. Key public institutions and community organizations are well-positioned to take cost-effective measures to achieve increased participation and serve some of the most “at risk” young immigrants in the state. But essential leadership and resources to facilitate implementation of the program are lacking.

DACA¹ is a strategic opportunity that offers undocumented young adults a new powerful incentive to stay in school and seek improved employment opportunities. While most undocumented youth and young adults have the resilience to navigate the exceptionally challenging conditions of being made “illegal” by a status thrust upon them, they also sometimes succumb to the negative forces they must face everyday. For example, unable to obtain legal employment, some necessarily turn to non-legal employment or other unlawful sources of income.² DACA is thus an opportunity to reduce current and future poverty, school drop-out rates, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and gang-related violence by offering temporary permission to stay in the US (i.e., “deferred action”) thereby improving the life prospects of young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children. Deferred action provides provisional legal status that is renewable after two years. Those granted deferred action are eligible for legal employment authorization and a driver’s license in California (and other states).

The Public Policy Institute of California estimates that in 2010 there were more than two million undocumented immigrants living in California.³ Along with Nevada and Texas, California has the highest concentration of undocumented immigrants at about 7% of the state’s population. Nearly half of undocumented adults in the US have minor children. The majority (77%) of these children are US citizens, while the others are undocumented residents of the US. Many undocumented immigrant children continue to reside in the US as undocumented adults.

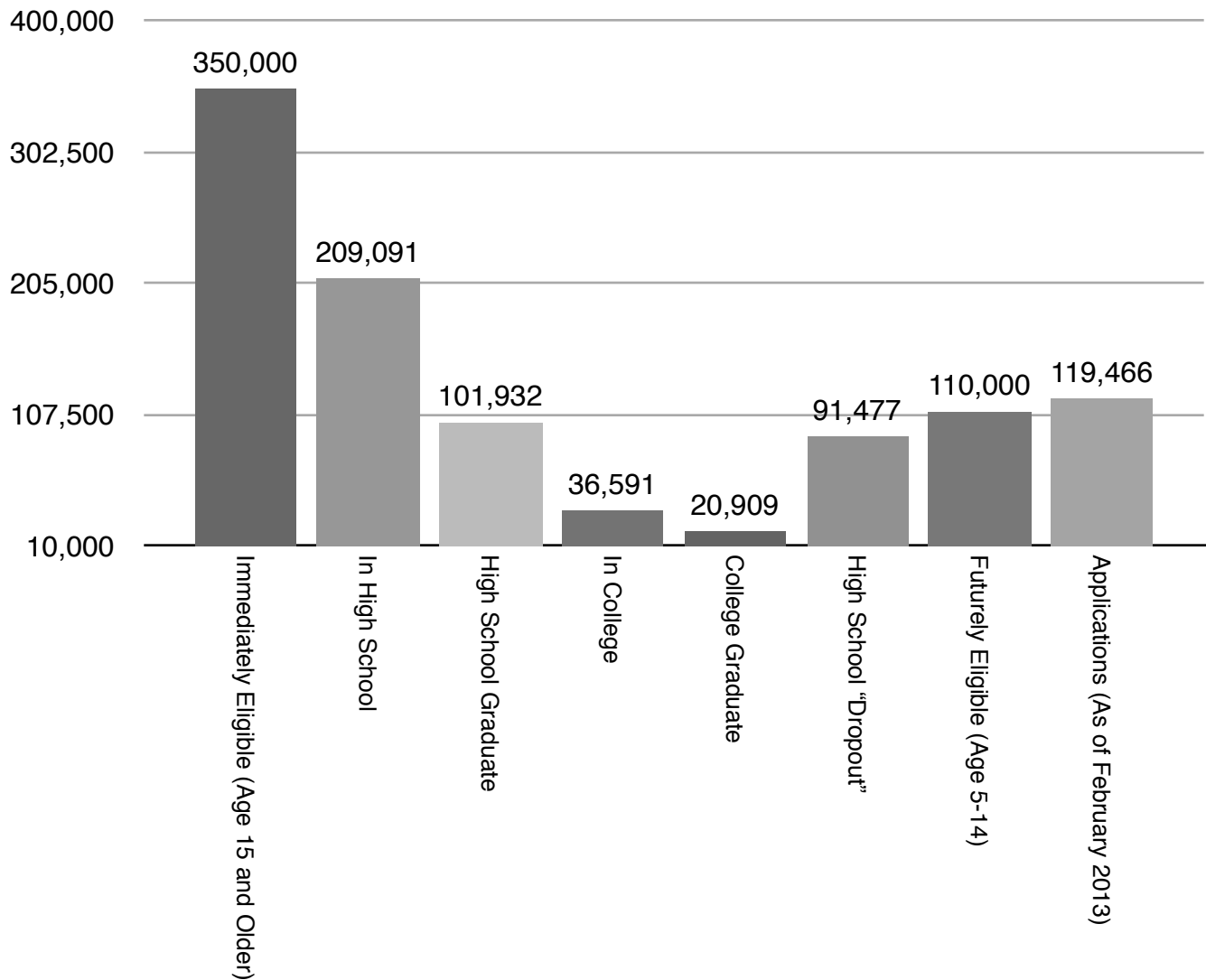
DACA Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible, applicants must have been under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012, and must be able to demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

- Entered the U.S. before the age of 16
- Entered the U.S. without authorization or overstayed their visa prior to June 15, 2012
- Lived continuously in the U.S. from June 15, 2007 up to the time of application
- Are currently in school or a literacy or vocational training program, or have graduated from high school or earned a GED, or are honorably discharged veterans of the US armed forces
- Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor or three or more misdemeanors (excluding traffic-related offenses), and do not otherwise pose a threat to public safety or national security

California currently has about 460,000 DACA eligible residents. As of February 2013, 119,466 applications were received from California DREAMers, the highest of any state, but only a small percentage (34%) of those who are immediately eligible.⁴

California DACA Eligibility



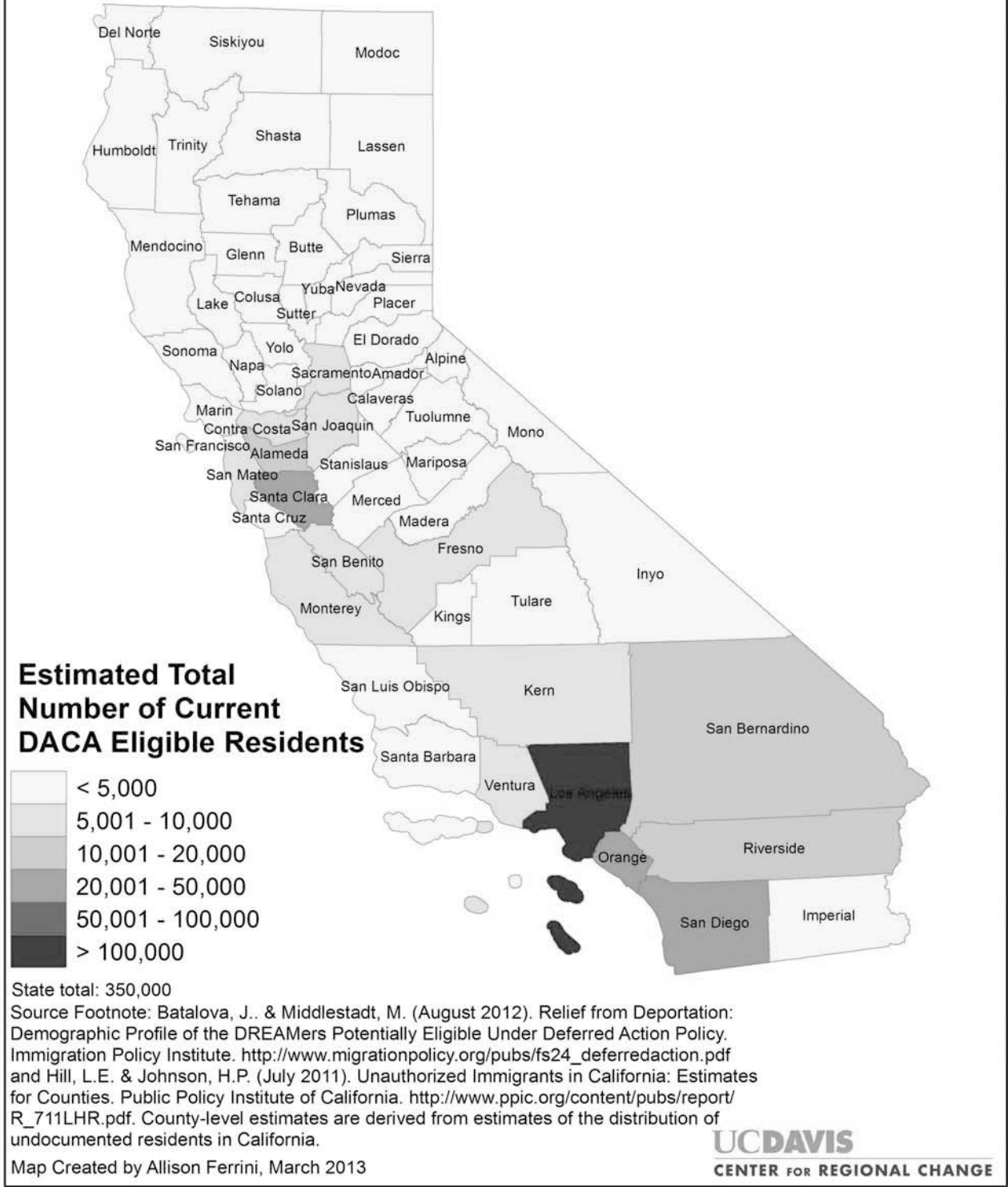
Sources: Batalova, J.. & Middlestadt, M. (August 2012). *Relief from Deportation: Demographic Profile of the DREAMers Potentially Eligible Under Deferred Action Policy*. Immigration Policy Institute. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/fs24_deferredaction.pdf and Hill, L.E. & Johnson, H.P. (July 2011). *Unauthorized Immigrants in California: Estimates for Counties*. Public Policy Institute of California. http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_711LHR.pdf

How Many Young Immigrants are Eligible for DACA Relief?

	Total	Total Currently Eligible	In High School	High School Grads	College Grads	In College	“Drop-outs”	Futurley Eligible (Age 5-14)
All U.S.	1,760,000	126,000	800,000	390,000	80,000	140,000	350,000	500,000
All California Counties	460,000	350,000	209,091	101,932	20,909	36,591	91,477	110,000
Alameda County	19,843	15,098	9,020	4,397	902	1,578	3,946	4,745
Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Alpine, Mono & Inyo	400	304	182	89	18	32	80	96
Butte	640	487	291	142	29	51	127	153
Colusa, Glenn, Tehema & Trinity	1,600	1,218	727	355	73	127	318	383
Contra Costa	12,642	9,619	5,746	2,801	575	1,006	2,514	3,023
Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc & Lassen	160	122	73	35	7	13	32	38
El Dorado	640	487	291	142	29	51	127	153
Fresno	7,841	5,966	3,564	1,738	356	624	1,559	1,875
Humbolt	320	244	145	71	15	25	64	77
Imperial	3,361	2,557	1,528	745	153	267	668	804
Kern	7,361	5,601	3,346	1,631	335	586	1,464	1,760
Kings	1,440	1,096	655	319	65	115	286	344
Los Angeles	146,585	111,532	66,630	32,482	6,663	11,660	29,150	35,053
Madera	1,920	1,461	873	426	87	153	382	459
Marin	2,240	1,705	1,018	496	102	178	446	536
Mendocino & Lake	1,280	974	582	284	58	102	255	306
Merced	3,521	2,679	1,600	780	160	280	700	842
Monterey & San Benito	9,922	7,549	4,510	2,199	451	789	1,973	2,373
Napa	2,560	1,948	1,164	567	116	204	509	612
Orange	46,248	35,189	21,022	10,248	2,102	3,679	9,197	11,059
Placer	1,280	974	582	284	58	102	255	306
Plumas, Sierra & Nevada	320	244	145	71	15	25	64	77
Riverside	23,364	17,777	10,620	5,177	1,062	1,859	4,646	5,587
Sacramento	10,402	7,914	4,728	2,305	473	827	2,069	2,487
San Bernardino	24,004	18,264	10,911	5,319	1,091	1,909	4,774	5,740
San Diego	31,686	24,109	14,403	7,021	1,440	2,520	6,301	7,577
San Francisco	4,801	3,653	2,182	1,064	218	382	955	1,148
San Joaquin	8,642	6,575	3,928	1,915	393	687	1,718	2,066
San Luis Obispo	1,440	1,096	655	319	65	115	286	344
San Mateo	8,802	6,697	4,001	1,950	400	700	1,750	2,105
Santa Barbara	5,921	4,505	2,691	1,312	269	471	1,177	1,416
Santa Clara	28,805	21,917	13,093	6,383	1,309	2,291	5,728	6,888
Santa Cruz	3,361	2,557	1,528	745	153	267	668	804
Shasta	160	122	73	35	7	13	32	38
Solano	3,841	2,922	1,746	851	175	306	764	918
Sonoma	6,561	4,992	2,982	1,454	298	522	1,305	1,569
Stanislaus	6,241	4,749	2,837	1,383	284	496	1,241	1,492
Sutter, Yuba	1,440	1,096	655	319	65	115	286	344
Tulare	4,641	3,531	2,109	1,028	211	369	923	1,110
Ventura	11,842	9,010	5,383	2,624	538	942	2,355	2,832
Yolo	1,920	1,461	873	426	87	153	382	459

Data Sources: Batalova, J.. & Middlestadt, M. (August 2012). Relief from Deportation: Demographic Profile of the DREAMers Potentially Eligible Under Deferred Action Policy. Immigration Policy Institute. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/fs24_deferredaction.pdf and Hill, L.E. & Johnson, H.P. (July 2011). Unauthorized Immigrants in California: Estimates for Counties. Public Policy Institute of California. http://www.ppica.org/content/pubs/report/R_711LHR.pdf. County-level estimates are derived from estimates of the distribution of undocumented residents in California.

California DACA Eligibility by County



DACA requires key institutional leadership, support, and resources to increase participation. While DACA provides a temporary reprieve from deportation and an opportunity for young undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children to obtain legal status and work authorization, there are still significant barriers to participate in the program. The federal application carries a hefty \$465 fee that cannot be waived and requires substantial documentation and submission of biometrics (photos and fingerprints). Additionally, deferred action must be renewed every two years. Providing help to facilitate the process, informing people of their rights and responsibilities, and directing applicants to sources of financial assistance is the least that various institutions can do, especially those that are already interacting with this population. In most communities, however, essential leadership is lacking. Key institutions, especially public school districts, community colleges, universities, social service agencies, and law enforcement, with a stake in this process and with the capacity to contribute to it have not yet acted in a coordinated and strategic manner.

Local immigration legal services providers lack the capacity to serve more than a small fraction of the many thousands of persons eligible for relief under the DACA program. In many communities in California and across the U.S., volunteers and community organizations are responding by training volunteers to help young immigrants prepare their application packets. Typically, these volunteers include many young immigrants, themselves often eligible for DACA relief, supported by pro bono efforts of qualified immigration attorneys. However, these efforts can only achieve the necessary quality and scale of services with significant participation, support, and coordination of efforts from key community institutions: education (including migrant education), law enforcement, social services, faith communities, public media, unions and employer organizations. These services are mostly concentrated in urban centers and are less accessible or non-existent in more rural settings and smaller communities.

Institutionally grounded and coordinated efforts offer the most promise for increasing DACA participation, thereby increasing equity and civic capacity in California. In addition to the individual and social benefits, DACA provides visibility and an opportunity for an extremely marginalized population to organize and participate in public life. If (as appears likely) comprehensive immigration reform is adopted in 2013 and effective in 2014, then these networks of volunteers based in immigrant community organizations and immigrant-serving public agencies formed for DACA assistance will be well-positioned to respond to the new challenges and needs for support. And in the longer run, as this period of community mobilization for expanded immigrant rights draws to an end, this exercise in mutual self-help and empowerment will have produced new leaders and new networks of civic engagement able to help generate civic capacity.

It is recommended that key grassroots, local and regional leaders act on this strategic opportunity and work together to support the implementation of the DACA program. While leadership from regional organizations and public institutions and agencies is essential, those who work or participate in this effort are best equipped to develop and continuously improve their own strategies. The most effective networks of support for DACA applicants will draw on the experience of those directly involved, and will be rooted in high schools, community colleges, universities, faith communities, neighborhood centers, unions, workplaces and other spaces where this effort can tap existing relationships for mutual support and continuous improvement. And the most effective strategies will invest in and rely on the capacity of these young immigrants for empowerment and mutual support.

Possible Elements of an Effective Network of Support

- **public education** on the benefits, eligibility criteria, and documentation required for DACA applicants
- **outreach and recruitment** of applicants
- **regularly scheduled “DACA Days”** for assistance in packet preparation
- **specialized legal services** for potential applicants with criminal records or other complications
- **financial assistance** for the \$465 application fee
- **volunteer recruitment and training**
- **regional inter-organizational DACA planning teams** to set goals, identify resources, promote communication and coordination, and adopt a plan for continuous evaluation and improvement of efforts
- **local teams of young immigrant volunteers (“DREAM teams”)** to serve as leaders and organizers

Possible Actions by Key Institutional Leaders

- **County superintendents of schools** might convene leaders of local districts, high schools, migrant education, and other programs targeting at-risk youth to identify resources to inform and recruit potential applicants, train and coordinate volunteers, and host events.
- **Immigration legal service providers** might consider how (in addition to providing affordable direct services) they might also provide training, supervision, applicant screening, and assistance with potential “problem cases”⁶ and final review of application packets produced with the help of volunteers or prepared by eligible individuals themselves.
- **School superintendents and high school principals** might identify staff in each district and at each high school to be trained in DACA eligibility and assigned responsibility for education and outreach in the school community, and might also make public school facilities available for monthly DACA clinics.
- **Migrant education and other academic support programs** might incorporate DACA promotion into their curriculum. Proactive leaders in these programs would need to explore ways to extend funding for support services to soon-to-be-documented youth in this transition period.
- **Adult education programs** might target otherwise DACA-eligible dropouts for enrollment in ESL, basic skills, GED, vocational or workforce preparation training. Severe deficits in today's supply of adult educational resources demand proactive leadership among policy-makers and practitioners.
- **Labor unions, faith communities, youth and other social services and community organizations** that interact with this population can bring their capacity for outreach and volunteer recruitment to the table, including training volunteers and sponsoring “DACA Days for DREAMers” in their own congregations, memberships and larger communities.

Resources

Over the past six months, local and national networks have already developed and begun to refine models for large-scale service provision. Examples of resources now available include:

- Catholic Charities' [Toolkit for DACA Workshops](#)⁷
- Educators for Fair Consideration's [Guide for Dreamers Applying for DACA](#)⁸
- National Immigration Law Center's [DACA Information](#)⁹
- CA Dream Network's [Deferred Action for DREAMers](#)¹⁰
- [United We DREAM](#) (a national network of youth-led immigrant organizations)¹¹

For attorneys, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center's [DACA: The Essential Legal Guide](#)¹² is a key resource.

Notes

¹ See <http://www.uscis.gov/childhoodarrivals>

² For more see: Abrego, Leisy Janet. "'I Can't Go to College Because I Don't Have Papers': Incorporation Patterns of Latino Undocumented Youth.'" *Latino Studies* 4, no. 3 (2006): 212-31. Brindis, Claire, Amy L. Wolfe, Virginia McCarter, Shelly Ball, and Susan Starbuck-Morales. "The associations between immigrant status and risk-behavior patterns in Latino adolescents." *J. of Adolescent Health* 17, no. 2 (1995): 99-105. and also Hill, Laura E., and Joseph Michael Hayes. *Out-of-school immigrant youth*. Public Policy Instit of CA, 2007.

³ http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=818

⁴ <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/DACA2-15-13.pdf>

⁶ Some young immigrants may not only be ineligible for DACA relief but also place themselves at risk for deportation due to criminal records or other factors (see below).

⁷ <http://cliniclegal.org/resources/toolkit-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-workshops>

⁸ <http://www.e4fc.org/dacaguide.html>

⁹ <http://www.nilc.org/dreamdeferred.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.cadreamnetwork.org/deferred-action-for-dreamers>

¹¹ <http://unitedwedream.org/>

¹² <http://www.ilrc.org/publications/daca-the-essential-legal-guide>

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