



DACA: What It Means for Dreamers and Their Families

Photo Credit: CNS/Kevin Lamarque, Reuters

Who Are Dreamers?

Dreamers are young people who were brought to the United States without authorization as children by their parents or family members. Dreamers include: young people who have received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), those who are eligible and did not apply for DACA, and other undocumented individuals of a similar age group who did not make the age-cut off for DACA (as they were slightly older or younger at the time of the inception of the DACA program in 2012 or at the time of the attempted end of the program in 2017). Dreamers are woven into the fabric of our country and of our Church, they are mothers and fathers, contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, doctors, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes.

Are DACA Recipients and Their Families Still at Risk?

Yes. On September 5, 2017 the Trump Administration attempted to end DACA, allowing one-time renewal for those whose status was set to expire between September 5, 2017 and March 5, 2018. For nearly three years the attempt to terminate DACA was the subject of litigation and multiple nationwide preliminary injunctions. On June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court issued a [ruling](#) that has at least temporarily prevented the Administration from ending DACA. Although the DACA program is safe for the time being, it is essential that Congress act to provide a more permanent protection to DACA recipients.

What Could Be the Impact on Dreamers and Their Families?

As there is no legislation that has passed both the Senate and the House to protect Dreamers, DACA recipients and their families still face an uncertain future. If there is an attempt to end the DACA program again, they may face the possibility of deportation, which means that many DACA youth could be separated from their children, spouses, relatives, and communities and sent back to a country that they might not even remember. They may also face the possibility of having their ability to work revoked when their status expires, putting themselves and their families at greater risk of economic, food, and housing insecurity, as well as decreased access to health care and other services.

How Many Families Would be Affected if DACA Were to be Rescinded in the Future?

There are approximately 700,000 individuals living in the US who currently have DACA.¹ And nearly 1.5 million individuals live in households with a DACA recipient, including more than a 250,000 US citizen children of DACA recipients. If DACA were to be rescinded in the future, well over 1 million families across the US will be drastically affected by this ruling and have their lives completely uprooted, with over a quarter million US citizen children facing the possibility being separated from their parents.

What Happens to the U.S. Citizen Children if Their DACA Parents are Deported?

DACA parents who have U.S. citizen children could face heartbreaking choices no parent should have to make. If they no longer have legal status, they could (1) return to their country of origin and bring their children with them; (2) return to their country of origin and leave behind their children; or (3) they could risk slipping into undocumented status in the United States. Each one of these options carries extreme devastation to the family unit, especially the children. Whether the children lose out on the love and presence of their parents, or the benefits of an American education they are entitled to as U.S. citizens, there is no decent or family-friendly answer.

Edna's Story²

Edna is a young woman who works at one of the Catholic dioceses. She is a college-educated leader in her community and parish, wife and mother of a U.S. citizen child. Edna and her husband, also a DACA recipient, are terrified about what will happen to their son if DACA is cancelled. She feels very strongly that her son should stay in his school and home and does not feel safe taking him back to Edna's home country. Edna and her husband are sick with despair about what to do.

Why Does the Catholic Church Support Dreamers and Their Families?

Pope Francis has long spoke of the importance of family, in his address at the 2015 World Meeting of Families he said that, "family life is something worthwhile, and that a society grows stronger and better, it grows in beauty and it grows in truth, when it rises on the foundation of the family."³ As Catholics, we believe that the dignity of every human being, particularly that of youth and families, must be protected. The Catholic Bishops have long supported Dreamers and their families and continue to do so. As Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, Chairman of the Committee on Migration has stated: "As a nation, we have a moral and humanitarian obligation to Dreamers. These young people have steadfastly worked to improve themselves and our country and attempted in good faith to comply with the law as it stood. Their futures hang in the balance."⁴

What Can You Do to Protect Dreamers and Their Families?

- (1) Urge Your Senators to Pass Legislation Giving Dreamers a Path to Citizenship — Urge your Senators to support legislative protections for DACA recipients generally and the Dream Act, specifically.
- (2) Pray for Dreamers — [Pray](#) for Dreamers during this difficult and uncertain time so that they and their families may feel supported and the support of the Lord. Pray also that our elected leaders exhibit moral leadership and provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers.
- (3) Help Stand in Solidarity — Access to trusted legal resources at this time is vital. Share resources from reputable sources such as [CLINIC](#), the Catholic Legal Immigration Network.

Endnotes:

¹ Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools, Migration Policy Institute (Aug. 31, 2018), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>.

² Name changed to protect identity.

³ Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil For The Festival of Families (Sept. 26, 2015), available at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150926_usa-festa-famiglie.html.

⁴ Bishop Joe S. Vásquez, Statement on Support for Finding a Legislative Solution for Dreamers; Ready to Work with Congress and White House (Jan. 10, 2018), available at <http://www.usccb.org/news/2018/18-007.cfm>.



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DACA: Lo Que Significa Para los Dreamers y Sus Familias

Crédito Fotográfico: CNS/Jeff Bruno, The Monitor

¿Quiénes Son los Dreamers?

Dreamers es el término que se le da a los jóvenes que fueron traídos a los Estados Unidos sin autorización cuando eran niños por sus padres o familiares. Dreamers incluye a: jóvenes que han recibido Acción Diferida para los Llegados en la Infancia (DACA, por sus siglas en inglés), aquellos que son elegibles y no solicitaron DACA, y otras personas indocumentadas de un grupo de edad similar que no cumplieron con el límite de edad para DACA (ya que eran un poco mayores o más jóvenes en el momento del inicio del programa DACA en el 2012 o en el momento en que se intentó finalizar el programa en el 2017). Los Dreamers están tejidos en la estructura de nuestro país y de nuestra Iglesia, son madres y padres, contribuyentes a nuestra economía, veteranos de nuestras fuerzas armadas, médicos, destacados académicos en nuestras universidades y líderes en nuestras parroquias.

¿Los Beneficiarios de DACA y Sus Familias Siguen En Riesgo?

Sí, la Administración de Trump intentó terminar el DACA el 5 de septiembre de 2017, permitiendo solamente una renovación para aquellos cuyo estatus expiraba entre el 5 de septiembre de 2017 y el 5 de marzo de 2018. Durante casi tres años el intento de terminar con la DACA fue objeto de litigios y múltiples órdenes judiciales preliminares a nivel nacional. En una decisión emitida el 18 de junio de 2020, la Corte Suprema emitió una decisión que al menos ha impedido temporalmente a la Administración terminar el programa. Aunque el programa de DACA es seguro por el momento, es esencial que el Congreso actúe para proporcionar una protección más permanente a los beneficiarios de DACA.

¿Qué Podría Ser el Impacto en los Dreamers y Sus Familias?

Como no existe legislación que haya sido aprobada tanto por el Senado como por la Cámara de Representantes para proteger a los Dreamers, los beneficiarios de DACA y sus familias todavía enfrentan un futuro incierto. Si hay otro intento a terminar DACA de nuevo, pueden enfrentar la posibilidad de deportación, lo que significa que muchos jóvenes de DACA podrían ser separados de sus hijos, de sus parejas, parientes y comunidades y regresados a un país que tal vez ni siquiera recuerden. También pueden enfrentar la posibilidad de que se revoque su capacidad de trabajo cuando expire su estado, poniéndose a sí mismos y a sus familiares en mayor riesgo de inseguridad económica, alimentaria y de vivienda y un menor acceso a la atención médica y otros servicios.

¿Cuántas Familias Serían Afectadas?

Hay aproximadamente 700,000 personas que viven en los EE. UU. y que actualmente tienen DACA.¹ Y casi 1.5 millones de individuos viven en hogares con un beneficiario de DACA, incluyendo los más de 250,000 hijos de beneficiarios de DACA que son ciudadanos estadounidenses. Si se rescinde DACA en el futuro, más de 1 millón de familias en los Estados Unidos serán drásticamente afectadas por este fallo y sus vidas serán completamente desarraigadas, con más de un cuarto de millón de niños estadounidenses que enfrentan la posibilidad de separarse de sus padres.

¿Qué Sucederá Con los Niños Ciudadanos Estadounidenses Si Sus Padres DACA Son Deportados?

Los padres beneficiarios de DACA que tienen hijos ciudadanos estadounidenses podrían enfrentar decisiones desgarradoras que ningún padre debería tener que tomar. Si ya no tienen estado de DACA, podrían (1) regresar a su país de origen y traer a sus hijos con ellos; (2) regresar a su país de origen y dejar atrás a sus hijos; o (3) podrían arriesgarse a caer en estado indocumentado en los Estados Unidos. Cada una de estas opciones lleva una devastación extrema a la unidad familiar, especialmente a los niños. Ya sea que los niños pierdan el amor y la presencia de sus padres, o los beneficios de una educación estadounidense a la cual tienen derecho como ciudadanos, no hay una respuesta digna o favorable a la familia.

La Historia de Edna²

Edna es una mujer joven que trabaja en una de las diócesis católicas. Ella es una líder con educación universitaria en su comunidad y parroquia, esposa y madre de un niño ciudadano estadounidense. Edna y su esposo, también beneficiario de DACA, están aterrorizados por lo que sucederá con su hijo si se cancela DACA. Edna siente fuertemente que su hijo debería quedarse en su escuela y en su casa y no se siente segura de llevarlo de regreso al país de origen de Edna. Edna y su esposo están enfermos de desesperación sobre qué hacer.

¿Por Qué la Iglesia Católica Apoya a los Dreamers y Sus Familias?

El Papa Francisco ha hablado durante mucho tiempo sobre la importancia de la familia, en su discurso en el Encuentro Mundial de Familias 2015 dijo que “la vida familiar es algo que vale la pena, y que una sociedad se fortalece y mejora, crece en belleza y crece en verdad, cuando se levanta sobre la base de la familia.”³ Como católicos, creemos que la dignidad de cada ser humano, particularmente la de los jóvenes y las familias, debe ser protegida. Los obispos católicos han apoyado durante mucho tiempo a los Dreamers y a sus familias y continúan haciéndolo. Como ha dicho el Obispo Joe S. Vásquez de Austin, Texas, Presidente de la Comisión de Migración: “Como nación, tenemos una obligación moral y humanitaria con los Dreamers. Estos jóvenes han trabajado incondicionalmente para mejorarse a sí mismos y a nuestro país e intentaron de buena fe cumplir con la ley tal como estaba. Sus futuros están en la balanza.”⁴

¿Qué Puede Hacer Usted Para Proteger a los Dreamers y Sus Familias?

- (1) *Urja a sus senadores a que aprueben legislación que brinde a un camino a la ciudadanía para los Dreamers* — Urja a sus senadores a apoyar las protecciones legislativas para los beneficiarios de DACA en general y la *Dream Act*, específicamente.
- (2) *Rece por los Dreamers* — **Rece** por los Dreamers durante este tiempo difícil e incierto para que ellos y sus familias puedan sentirse apoyados y sentir el apoyo del Señor. Rece también que nuestros líderes electos muestren liderazgo moral y brinden un camino a la ciudadanía a los Dreamers.
- (3) *Ayude con mantenerse en solidaridad* — El acceso a recursos legales confiables es vital en este momento. Comparta recursos de fuentes acreditadas como [CLINIC](#), la Red Católica de Inmigración Legal.

Notas Finales:

¹ Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools, Migration Policy Institute (Aug. 31, 2018), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>.

² *El nombre ha sido cambiado para proteger la identidad.*

³ Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil For The Festival of Families (Sept. 26, 2015), disponible en http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150926_usa-festa-famiglie.html.

⁴ Bishop Joe S. Vásquez, Statement on Support for Finding a Legislative Solution for Dreamers; Ready to Work with Congress and White House (Jan. 10, 2018), disponible en <http://www.usccb.org/news/2018/18-007.cfm>.



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The Financial Contributions of Dreamers: What the U.S. Economy Stands to Lose

Credit: Jeff Bruno/CNS

Update: [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) (DACA) was implemented in 2012; The Trump Administration attempted to end DACA on September 5, 2017, allowing one-time renewal for those whose status was set to expire between September 5, 2017 and March 5, 2018. For nearly three years the attempt to terminate DACA was the subject of litigation and multiple nationwide preliminary injunctions. In a [decision](#) issued on June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that has at least temporarily prevented the Administration from ending the program. Although the DACA program is safe from elimination for the time being, it is essential that the U.S. Senate act to provide more permanent protection to DACA recipients.

Now more than ever it is imperative that the Senate passes legislation that will provide permanent relief to DACA and Dreamer youth. USCCB supports Dreamers and has advocated for the DREAM Act and H.R. 6 the American Dream and Promise Act.

How much do DACA-eligible immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy?

DACA recipients bring in billions of dollars to the U.S. economy every year. Currently, DACA youth alone add an estimated \$42 billion to the GDP every year¹. This means that the positive economic contributions of DACA recipients are almost six times more than the roughly \$7 billion that program costs the United States. If DACA were to be ended in the United States, the U.S. economy, the loss to the economy could be as much as \$21 billion.²

What are some of the ways that DACA-eligible immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy?

(1) Paying Taxes

DACA recipients contribute billions of dollars to the economy every year. One of the most common ways is

through the paying of taxes. Despite common misunderstanding, undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars in federal and state taxes. In 2017, the New American Economy found that DACA eligible individuals contributed \$4 billion in taxes for that year - almost \$2 billion of that amount being contributions to state and local taxes.³

(2) Participation in Workforce

Participation in the workforce is another major way that DACA recipients contribute to the national economy. Most immigrants who receive legal status under DACA are employed in some capacity. As of 2017, the employment rate of DACA-eligible individuals stood at 93%.⁴ This rate was 33% higher than that year's average employment rate for the U.S. population as a whole.⁵

(3) Creating Jobs

DACA eligible individuals aren't only working for other businesses: in 2017, 5% of the DACA eligible population owned their own businesses - a higher percentage than their U.S. born counterparts.⁶ The type of employment that DACA recipients pursue cross dozens of disciplines, from agriculture, to education, to healthcare.

(4) Consumer Spending

The DACA eligible population also contributes through their spending on goods and services in the U.S. economy. The United States relies on consumer spending to function, as it affects virtually every part of the economy. In 2017 alone, the DACA-eligible population earned 23.4 billion dollars, which translates to 19.4 billion dollars in spending power after taxes⁷.

Why Does the Church Support Dreamers?

The Catholic Church's support of Dreamers stems from the belief of the inherent human dignity of every person and the need to protect the vulnerable, including children. Dreamers were brought to the United States as children and should be allowed to continue to achieve their God-given potential. In 2018, Bishop Vásquez of Austin, then Chairman of the Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM), stated: "As a nation, we have a moral and humanitarian obligation to Dreamers. These young people have steadfastly worked to improve themselves and our country and attempted in good faith to comply with the law. Their futures hang in the balance." On June 18, 2020, in [response](#) to the U.S. Supreme Court finding the Administration's attempted rescission of the program was unlawful, Archbishop Gomez President of USCCB and Bishop Dorsonville, Chair of the USCCB/COM stated: "Through today's decision and beyond, we will continue to accompany you and your families. You are a vital part of our Church and our community of faith."

How Can You Help Protect Dreamers?

(1) Contact Your Senator and Urge Legislative Action

A pathway to citizenship would provide security and hope for the hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients who have not only made a home in this country, but have actively worked to provide for its economy. A significant way to help DACA recipients is to advocate with your Senator for legislative action that would protect Dreamers. Last year, the House of Representatives passed a bill, H.R. 6, the "American Dream and Progress Act", that would give all Dreamers a pathway to citizenship. However, the Senate has not yet passed any legislative protection for Dreamers. One of the best things you can do for DACA recipients right now is to contact your Senators and ask them to support the Dream Act. See www.justiceforimmigrants.org for our Action Alert.

(2) Learn more about Dreamers

You can find information about DACA and the Dreamers through [resources on the Justice For Immigrants website](#).

You can also use the form located at the bottom of this page to sign up for information and updates from JFI. By staying informed, you will have the tools you need to better advocate to protect Dreamers.

(3) Pray for Dreamers and the Protection of all Vulnerable Groups

Suggested [prayers](#) for the protection of Dreamers can be found on the JFI website in English and in Spanish.

Endnotes

1 Jacqueline Varas & Usama Zafar, “Estimating the Economic Contributions of DACA Recipients,” AMERICAN ACTION FORUM (December 21, 2017)., available at <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/estimating-economic-contributions-daca-recipients/>

2 *Id.*

3 NEW AMERICAN ECONOMY, OVERCOMING THE ODDS: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DACA-ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS AND TPS HOLDERS TO THE U.S. ECONOMY 4 (2019)., available at https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DACA-TPS_Brief.pdf

4 *Id.* at 3.

5 *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, U.S. DEPT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS12300000>, (Last accessed March 31, 2020).

6 NEW AMERICAN ECONOMY, OVERCOMING THE ODDS: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DACA-ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS AND TPS HOLDERS TO THE U.S. ECONOMY 5 (2019)., available at https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DACA-TPS_Brief.pdf

7 *Id.* at 4.