

BECOMING AN UndocuAlly



Undocumented students face an array of practical, bureaucratic and legal challenges. Despite the challenges, the mission of The City University of New York remains the same: to provide a high quality, accessible education to all New Yorkers, regardless of background. The right to access an education in the United States is constitutionally assured to all, regardless of residency status or citizenship.

The newly implemented José Peralta New York State DREAM Act entitles undocumented students and others to receive state financial aid, making it possible for more students to pursue their education at CUNY.

Below is practical information on how CUNY staff, especially front-line admissions, financial aid and advising personnel, can support undocumented students in our offices and campuses.



WHAT DOES BEING UNDOCUMENTED MEAN?

An undocumented immigrant lacks lawful status granted by federal authorities because he/she/they:

- Overstayed a temporary visa and lost status
- Entered the U.S. without inspection

Some undocumented persons have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or other temporary lawful presence – this is different from permanent status.

Some undocumented persons, including those with DACA, face many restrictions in the United States, including:

- Not being eligible for the Affordable Care Act
- Not being eligible for some careers when licensure requirements/checks are required
- Fearing deportation either of self and/or family members

Persons without DACA face additional restrictions:

- Not having a Social Security number
- Not having work authorization
- Not being able to travel outside the United States and travel is limited within the United States

The identities of undocumented students, just like those of all students, are complex. Immigration status intersects with race, sexuality, gender identity, religion, socio-economic status, disability status and more.

RECENT PROGRESS

- **DRIVER'S LICENSES** – The New York State Green Light Bill allows undocumented NYS residents to apply for a driver's license beginning on Dec. 16, 2019.

SUPPORTING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Undocumented students may approach business-as-usual processes and protocols related to applying for financial aid or getting a driver's license with anxiety, fear and distrust. Be mindful of these signs and let undocumented students know that you are an UndocuAlly:

- Use the term “undocumented” to refer to a student’s immigration status
- Ask the student if it’s OK to mention his, her or their immigration status when making a referral or introducing him, her or them to other University officials
- Connect students to the proper resources
- Be empathetic and help students feel understood
- As with any student, use statements that reflect your understanding of what they are going through
- Acknowledge the challenges of the situation and choose your words and tone
- Provide a safe, nondiscriminatory environment
- Be responsive to incidents and allegations of discrimination and harassment
- Understand, stay apprised of, and act upon policies that support students
- Help University members to understand the fears, needs and concerns of students



“CUNY stands ready to have as many DREAMers as possible take advantage of this historic opportunity.”

– *Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez*

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

- For more information about the implementation of the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act and additional resources, visit cuny.edu/NYSDreamAct
- CUNY Chancellor Matos Rodríguez emphasizes unwavering support for students: cuny.edu/undocu-info
- To speak to an immigration lawyer about any immigration or citizenship matter, call CUNY Citizenship Now! at **646-664-9400** for a free consultation. For more information, visit cuny.edu/citizenshipnow
- “Know Your Rights” information: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/07.11.19.KnowYourRights.pdf>
- If a student is questioned or detained by ICE, call the New York State Liberty Defense Team and Office for New Americans Hotline: **800-566-7636**
- City-funded, free and safe immigration legal help is also available through NYC Immigrant Affairs. Call **1-800-354-0365** or **311** & say “**ActionNYC**”
- The Legal Aid Society Immigration Hotline can be reached at **1-844-955-3425**