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DACA Resources by California County

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DREAMER Resources: The Most Affordable and Free Resources to renew DACA by California's Top Counties

By Alejandra Zamora*

[The DACA \(Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals\)](#) program was implemented in 2012, it protects undocumented youth from deportation and grants a work permit to those who entered the U.S. before their 16th birthday. The Trump Administration then rescinded the program in 2017 but was later opened for renewal applicants in 2018. The program was briefly re-opened to new applicants between late 2020 and July 2021, [however was then restricted to renewal applicants once again.](#)

While the [availability of the DACA program has fluctuated within the past years.](#) Dreamers will always benefit from free and/or affordable immigration resources.

The Biggest Challenges

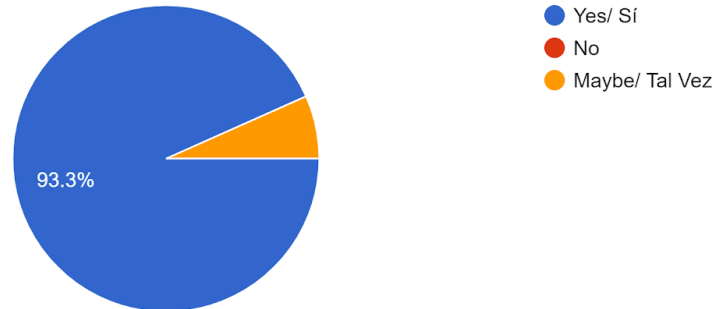
- Limited affordable or free assistance to apply for DACA
- Finding the right resources
- Lack of communication with lawyers

What Needs to Improve

- It is important to know where California's undocumented population lives so that we can ensure that those counties receive the necessary resources
- We need to promote the accessibility of these resources
- 93.3% of Dreamers surveyed said that they would've liked a single web page where they could easily find the information of affordable/free DACA resources they need

If there was a single website to find resources to apply for DACA, would you have used it?/ Si hubiese una sola pagina web donde pudieras encontrar recursos para DACA, la utilizarías?

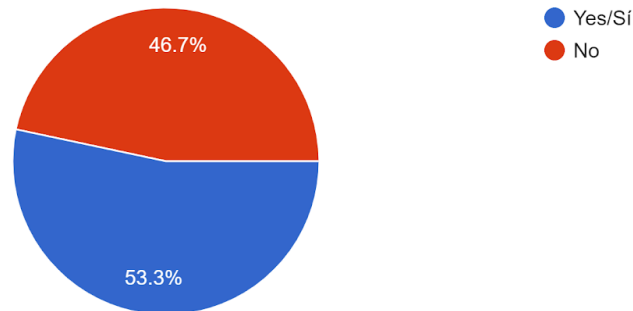
15 responses



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Did you receive help to apply to DACA for FREE or at LOW-COST?/ ¿Recebiste ayuda GRATUITA o de BAJO-COSTO para mandar tu solicitud de DACA?

15 responses



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The Obstacles to Finding Free Assistance

By sending out a short online survey via Facebook groups, I received 15 responses from Dreamers all across the country. The survey results show that 53.3% of respondents received free/low-cost assistance to apply for DACA. While California is the main focus of the map below, the experiences of Dreamers across the country vary.

Maria Huerta** of South Carolina spoke with me about her inability to find free/affordable help. When the DACA applications re-opened in late December 2020, Huerta rushed to find a lawyer to assist with her 15-year-old son's application, she paid more than \$1,500 and was told her son's application was sent in January 2021, however, Huerta has yet to hear back from her lawyer or USCIS.

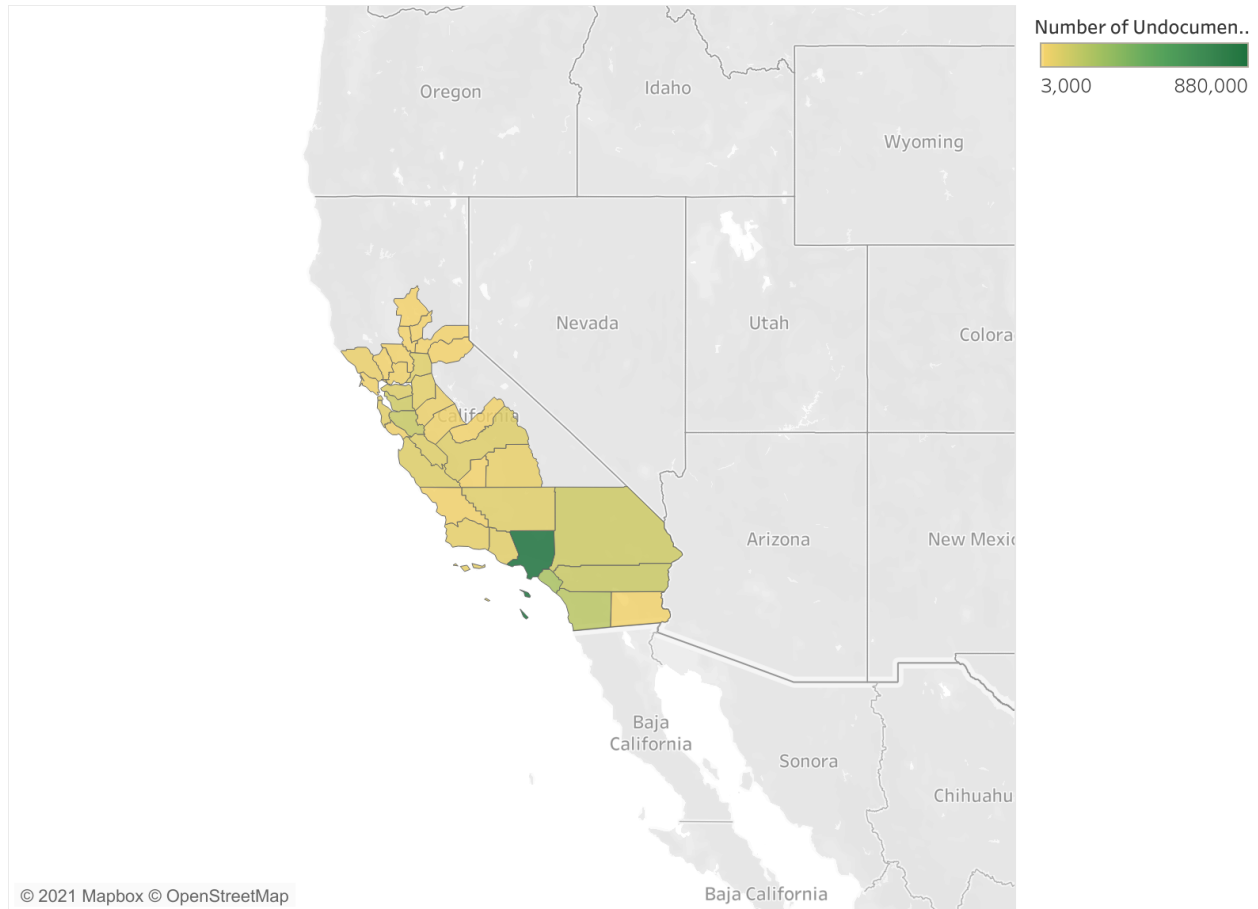
[America Hernandez](#), a DACA recipient and Senior Social Services Coordinator at KIND, shared with me that there were limited resources for Dreamers when she applied in 2012. She now works with various organizations that assist Dreamers, however, she brought up the point that even some regions in California are not supportive of Dreamers. Despite the Texas court case that closed DACA to new applicants, Hernandez will continue to fight for young immigrants and for the highly anticipated immigration reform.

[Dulce Garcia of Border Angels](#) spoke with me about her experience applying for DACA in 2014, she also mentioned the \$495 fee was a huge obstacle for both her and the clients she now represents. Her clients worked extremely hard to save up the money, but their application was never opened after the Texas case. Garcia's dedication to dreamers and the undocumented community is unwavering, as she and other lawyers are working on moving the Texas case to a more venue that is less anti-immigrant.

How to utilize the map (To use full interactive map [click here](#))

- Below you will see a map with California's top 30 counties and their specific immigration resources by county
- To find the resources in your county:
 - Select your county (or if not available, select the next nearest county)
 - Then click the blue "DACA RESOURCES IN THIS COUNTY"
 - The link will take you to a list of organizations that provide low-cost or free immigration assistance
- The Map was created with data from the Migration Policy Institute's Data Hub at <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/us-immigration-policy-program-data-hub/ unauthorized-immigrant-population-profiles>

Number of Undocumented Immigrants by County



(This is a picture, for the full interactive map [click here](#))

What we can see from the map

In California 2.6 million immigrants are undocumented. The dark green-yellow counties (primarily in Southern California, followed by Silicon Valley) hold a larger percentage of the state's undocumented population. As depicted in the map, LA County alone holds 33.52 % of California's undocumented population. The counties in gray have less than 3000 undocumented folks, and therefore data is unavailable.

Conclusion

Based on my conversations with Dreamers and the responses to my survey, California is in much better shape than others in terms of affordable/free assistance for DACA. Other states seem to struggle to provide any help, whereas here in California we have extensive resources. Our focus must shift to ensuring that all Dreamers receive the assistance they require and that any Dreamer who seeks assistance does not struggle to find help.

On a broader scale, all of the Dreamers that I spoke with mentioned the *need* for comprehensive immigration reform. It is now time for the Biden Administration and Congress to step for DACA, and for the immigrant community that makes America greater.

To find out how you can renew DACA click [here](#)

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**Name has been changed to protect the identity of the interviewee