

DIPLOMA, PLEASE

PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR DACA- AND POTENTIAL DREAM ACT-ELIGIBLE YOUTH



By Margie McHugh

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Executive Summary

With the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program recently passing its two-year anniversary, many are attempting to understand its success in providing protection from deportation to the estimated 2.1 million young unauthorized immigrants who could eventually benefit from the program.¹ About 681,000 had applied to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for DACA protection as of July 20, 2014—roughly 37 percent of the 1.8 million potential applicants now ages 15 or older.² A wide range of factors is thought to have contributed to discouraging applications, including the program's \$465 application fee, difficulties in proving the five-year continuous residency requirement, fears of drawing attention to other unauthorized family members, and more general lack of knowledge about the program or access to experts who can provide legal advice or assistance in applying.

These important barriers notwithstanding, DACA is unprecedented in its requirement that applicants who lack a high school diploma or equivalent and are not in school must enroll in an adult education or training program in order to qualify. The share of potential applicants affected by these rules is large—almost 20 percent could not meet DACA's education requirement at the time of the program's launch, and 22 percent³ of all potentially eligible youth were still under age 15 and therefore ineligible to apply. In theory, DACA provides a powerful incentive for hundreds of thousands of young students to stay in school and obtain their high school diploma, and for those beyond compulsory school age who lack a high school diploma to further their education by enrolling in a qualified adult education or training program. However, adult education is arguably the weakest link in the U.S. education pipeline, and many of the local school districts that enroll large numbers of DACA youth have low graduation and high dropout rates. An array of actions would therefore be necessary to help support the educational success of these youth—to meet DACA's diploma or adult education and training enrollment requirements, and to make progress in preparing for tougher postsecondary completion requirements expected in future immigration bills.

Adult education is arguably the weakest link in the U.S. education pipeline, and many of the local school districts that enroll large numbers of DACA youth have low graduation and high dropout rates.

In addition, a significant number of potential applicants have a high school diploma or equivalent and therefore meet DACA's education requirement but have not completed the two years towards a bachelor's degree or higher that are required for legal permanent status in prior versions of the DREAM Act, which has been introduced continuously in Congress since 2001. In fact, only 99,000 (5 percent) of the potential 2.1 million DACA applicants had an associate's degree or higher at the time of the program's launch and

- 1 Protections under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program are provided to individuals who were present in the United States as of June 15, 2012, had arrived before the age of 16, resided continuously in the United States for at least five years, and met certain other requirements. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," updated June 5, 2014, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca#requestDACA.
- 2 The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) report *DACA at the Two-Year Mark: A National and State Profile of Youth Eligible and Applying for Deferred Action* discusses a number of possible ways to calculate application rates. See Jeanne Batalova, Sarah Hooker, and Randy Capps with James Bachmeier, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark: A National and State Profile of Youth Eligible and Applying for Deferred Action* (Washington DC: MPI, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/daca-two-year-mark-national-and-state-profile-youth-eligible-and-applying-deferred-action.
- 3 This includes all 921,000 potentially eligible youth who were under age 19 at the time of DACA's launch, the vast majority of whom would not yet have completed high school or earned a diploma.



would be certain to qualify under the DREAM Act's tougher education requirements.⁴ The high value of educational attainment for DACA-DREAM youth—for their life trajectory as well as their eligibility for DACA and perhaps eventually legal permanent residence—has resulted in heightened interest in strategies to promote their educational success. The significant education-success challenges key subgroups of DACA-DREAM youth face and the wide range of promising efforts to address them are the focus of this report.

A. *Population Demographics and System Capacity*

Several snapshots of population demographics⁵ and adult education system capacity demonstrate key contextual points that bear on the ability of DACA-DREAM youth to meet education attainment or enrollment requirements. These include:

- **Age distribution.** Naturally, potentially eligible DACA individuals have aged since estimates of their age and educational attainment at the time of DACA's launch were first developed. As of 2014 approximately 68 percent of the potentially eligible pool, or 1,457,000 individuals, are age 19 or older, with roughly 383,000 ages 15-18, and 296,000 age 15 and under. The fact that such a large share is now age 19 and over (in fact, in their mid- to late 20s) means that many will have acquired employment, parenting, and other responsibilities that pose high hurdles to returning to education and training programs.
- **Family income.** At the time of DACA's launch, 39 percent of potential applicants (824,000 individuals) lived in families whose income was less than the federal poverty level (FPL), and an additional 33 percent were in families whose income was between 100 and 199 percent of FPL. Low family income has been widely reported to be a barrier in affording the program's application and renewal fees, as well as participation in adult education and training programs. The strong connection between family income and college completion also indicates that strategies to support these individuals' completion of two- and four-year college degrees must take into account the financial pressures they and their families experience.
- **Variation among the undereducated.** Two subgroups exist among the 426,000, or 20 percent, of potentially eligible youth who did not meet the program's education requirements: those with no years of high school education (38 percent) who appear to have proceeded directly into the workforce or home-making, and those who completed 9-12 years of school (much of this likely in U.S. schools) but dropped out before obtaining their diploma (62 percent). More than 70 percent of those in the first group reported very low English proficiency while 70 percent of those in the second group reported speaking English "only," "very well," or "well."
- **Gender imbalance.** In the pool of all potential DACA applicants, males outnumber females by a rate of 54 to 46 percent (1.2 million versus 972,000). The gender imbalance is more pronounced—62 percent male and 38 percent female—among those ages 15 and older who did not appear to meet the education threshold when the program launched. Gender is important to consider in efforts to improve DACA youth application rates and education success. For example, in Migration Policy Institute (MPI) fieldwork interviews women were reported to have fewer resources and less family support for applying for DACA, while Hispanic males were reported to shun English as a Second Language (ESL) and adult education programs, which they perceive as irrelevant to their learning and employment interests.
- **Adult education system capacity.** National adult education system data show a steep decline in system capacity at precisely the time when hundreds of thousands of DACA applicants need

⁴ The available data do not allow us to estimate the number of students who have completed at least two years of postsecondary education in a program for a bachelor's degree or higher, but who have not yet obtained a degree.

⁵ All population data are drawn from Batalova, Hooker, and Capps with Bachmeier, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*.



to enroll in programs to qualify for DACA protections. Overall capacity reported by the major federal-state partnership system shrank by 27 percent in the last six years: ESL instructional programs lost almost 390,000 seats or 36 percent of prior capacity, and Adult Secondary Education (i.e. high school equivalency) programs lost 35 percent of their capacity during the same period, dropping from almost 298,000 enrollments to just under 194,000.

- **Low enrollment by undereducated individuals.** Census data indicate that of the roughly 5.4 million foreign-born adults ages 18-64 without a high school diploma or equivalent and less than nine years of education, less than one-half of 1 percent (25,000) reported being enrolled in school, including in programs that would lead to a high school diploma or equivalent. Only 8 percent of those with 9-12 years of underlying education reported program enrollment. These data indicate overall program access for lower-educated immigrants is extremely limited and those most likely to access services have higher levels of school attainment.

B. Education Needs of Potential DACA-DREAM Applicants

The DACA program takes the unprecedented step of tying an immigration status benefit to completion of a U.S. high school diploma/equivalent or enrollment in a qualifying adult education or workforce skills program. While education degree requirements have long been placed on individuals applying from outside the United States for employment and student visas, never before has a federal immigration policy been so explicitly intertwined with the country's domestic elementary, secondary, and adult education and skills systems. Similarly, never before have applicants for a federal immigration benefit needed to rely so heavily on these institutions and, in doing so, contend with the serious issues that beset them. Indeed, as has become apparent since DACA's launch, the strengths and weaknesses of local K-12 schools and adult education and workforce training programs significantly affect applicants' ability to qualify for the program (not to mention their success in advancing towards desired diplomas, credentials, and degrees).

Never before has a federal immigration policy been so explicitly intertwined with the country's domestic elementary, secondary, and adult education and skills systems.

To better understand the impact of these unprecedented requirements on potential beneficiaries and the education and training systems that serve them, this report explores education-success challenges facing three key subgroups in DACA's pool of potential applicants. These include individuals who are under age 19 without a high school diploma or equivalent, those age 19 and over without a high school diploma or equivalent, and those age 19 and over with only a high school diploma or equivalent.

I. Individuals Under Age 19, without a High School Diploma

Approximately 43 percent of the overall DACA applicant pool in 2012 was under age 19; by mid-2014, only 32 percent was. All potentially eligible applicants currently under age 19 would have been in the United States since age 11 or less; presumably, then, they have been enrolled in U.S. schools for many years.



DACA may provide encouragement for these youth to remain enrolled in school, obtain a high school diploma, and be prepared to progress onward to at least a two-year postsecondary degree. Unfortunately, however, looking to historical trends in success for similarly situated youth, they face poor odds of doing so. The low quality of instructional services for English Language Learners (ELLs) in many school districts, tendency of schools that immigrant youth attend to be under-resourced and low quality, and increasing academic requirements for graduation in many states, all contribute to alarmingly high pushout and dropout rates for immigrant and Latino youth.

In addition, some of these youth may also feel pressure to leave school in order to work and contribute to family resources, and they may have more limited “college knowledge”—e.g. information on career and technical training opportunities, and on navigating the application processes for college admission, scholarships, and financial aid.

2. Individuals Ages 19 and Over, with No High School Diploma or Equivalent

Nearly one in five potential DACA beneficiaries were ages 19 and over and lacked a high school diploma or equivalent and were not enrolled in school when the program launched. Under DACA program rules they must enroll in a qualifying education or training program. In addition to systemic problems such as limited program slots and lack of effective instructional models, a great deal of confusion still surrounds USCIS’ published guidance regarding these provisions, leaving many service providers uncertain as to whether particular programs meet the agency’s standards.

The data snapshots point to two subpopulations within this group—each facing markedly different challenges. They are those with:

a) *Little U.S. Education Experience*

A significant share entered the United States before age 16, and appears to have gone directly to work, often in agriculture and construction. Some have low or extremely low levels of formal education—many having completed less than 8th grade; many are also limited in their English proficiency. Even when state rules permit their enrollment (most do) and program slots are available, these individuals face multiple barriers to succeeding in existing adult education and workforce programs.

b) *Some U.S. High School Experience*

For those who have completed some or most of high school, difficulties in obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent are often still high. Many in this group are thought to have spent a number of years in U.S. schools, dropping out for reasons such as pregnancy, lack of credit attainment, or a need to work.

Local leaders and program administrators report that little information about DACA’s provisions has reached either of the subpopulations that lack a high school diploma or equivalent. Given their lack of educational attainment many do not identify as “DREAMers” and as a result they may not self-identify as potential DACA recipients.

3. Ages 19 and Over, with ONLY a High School Diploma or Equivalent

These potential DACA applicants have obtained their high school diploma or equivalent and thus already meet the program’s basic educational requirements. They represent a prime opportunity for investment, particularly for those in the college access and completion fields who seek to improve immigrant and



Latino postsecondary completion rates.⁶ Given that many face a difficult path in meeting two-year college attainment requirements likely to be contained in future DREAM Act-like legislation, they are also a prime focus for those concerned with immigrant integration and immigration reform outcomes. In fact, the education-success barriers faced by these unauthorized youth led MPI in 2010 to estimate that only 38 percent of the roughly 2 million potentially eligible for protection under DREAM Act legislation proposed at that time would ultimately meet the college attainment (two years) and therefore permanent residence requirements.

Most of the young adults in this group would be considered “nontraditional” college students in that they are likely employed and have low incomes, and might be parents of young children and also the first in their families to attend college. A growing research base is demonstrating effective policies and practices that support these students’ success, including provision of more intensive academic counseling and support, financial aid for part-time students, and reforms of placement testing and remedial education practices.

C. Recommendations

Drawing lessons from promising practices highlighted in the report, a series of recommendations is provided describing actions that policymakers, education program managers, community leaders, and private funders can take to address the education-success needs of DACA-DREAM youth. They include:

- I. **Address individual needs for basic information, system navigation, and financial resources to support program participation.**
 - **Create well-tailored information and marketing resources that address the intersection of DACA with educational attainment challenges for young adults in the three key subgroups.** For those under age 19 these efforts should provide a motivational message to stay in school, apply for DACA, and obtain a two-year postsecondary degree, while also leading students to tailored, one-stop information resources on college access and success. Those ages 19 and over without a high school diploma or equivalent require marketing that will help them to self-identify as DACA-eligible, and provide “how-to” advice for overcoming the multiple barriers they face to program enrollment and completion. For those ages 19 and over with only a high school diploma or equivalent, targeted marketing and information resources should point to the personal and potential immigration-related benefits of pursuing postsecondary education now, and guide these nontraditional college students to “bridge” or other programs that can prepare them for the rigors of college study; they should also address specific concerns related to the patchwork of financial aid, scholarships, and other supports available to unauthorized youth pursuing postsecondary education in a given state. Marketing to all subgroups should include messaging that appeals specifically to young men, reflecting also occupations and career paths likely to interest them.
 - **Provide personalized guidance and navigation support at the front end of adult education programs so individuals obtain the information and advice they need to make informed class enrollment and “pathway” choices.** While this type of guidance is understood to be needed in both the high school and community college contexts, it is not part of the federal-state adult education program model, where it is especially needed by those who are undereducated and have multiple barriers to program participation. Such specialized guidance

⁶ In 2012, only 21 percent of Latino young adults ages 25 to 34 had completed a two- or four-year college degree. Similarly, 21 percent of low-income young adults (25-34) had done so.



is very important for individuals who may have been out of school for many years, have specific rather than general gaps in their English language literacy skills, and/or whose postsecondary transition goals require selection of noncredit courses that will speed rather than impede their education progress. Mentoring programs would likely also prove valuable for DACA adult learners who face complex and potentially lengthy education pathways.

- ***Expand programs that make participation in adult education and training or postsecondary education more affordable for low-income DACA youth.*** Costs associated with program attendance and/or tuition and fees loom large for DACA youth and are a frequently cited barrier to program enrollment and persistence. Providing scholarships or grants to adult learners to pay for child care or transportation costs (e.g. through a fund administered by local programs) or programs that offer learning or work stipends could help make program attendance affordable for working, low-income young adults. Addressing the range of financial barriers to postsecondary education via efforts to expand availability of scholarships and grants for full-time and part-time students that address both tuition and other expenses associated with costs of study are also essential.

2. Address targeted program improvement and system coordination needs in the adult, career-technical, and postsecondary education arenas.

- ***System coordination initiatives that begin with mapping education service sufficiency for DACA-DREAM individuals are a logical starting point for identifying system strengths and weaknesses and priority areas for investment.*** These efforts can engage the full range of providers and stakeholders in a local area; they can also focus more narrowly on key education providers—addressing, for example, alignment of course content and credit across local adult education and community college programs, or facilitating early enrollment of high school seniors in local community colleges.
- ***Programs that are proving to be more effective in assisting nontraditional adult students in obtaining high school equivalency diplomas, industry-recognized credentials, and postsecondary degrees can be adapted and expanded with an eye to the needs of DACA youth participants.*** These include bridge programs to accelerate high school equivalency attainment and successful postsecondary transition and I-BEST-like programs that integrate noncredit ESL or basic education instruction with college-credit courses. In addition, Spanish-language General Educational Development (GED)/high school equivalency programs will result in quicker basic education progress for Spanish speakers who are low-educated and Limited English Proficient (LEP).
- ***Maximize public library capacities to meet DACA-DREAM youth needs.*** In many parts of the country, libraries are the most accessible literacy-focused provider available to meet needs. Supporting local libraries in providing a range of relevant resources—for example, distance learning, high school equivalency exam practice, and information on local service providers—could help many DACA youth chart a path to achieving their education goals.

3. Address field-building needs.

Adult education and training services are the weakest and most vulnerable portion of the education pipeline, yet they are the cornerstone of effective immigrant integration efforts. Key field capacities that would need to be strengthened in order to support the educational success of DACA and potential DREAM Act youth who have not yet completed high school diplomas or two years of college include:

- ***Research and policy analysis.*** Expanded research and policy analysis capacity at the state and



local levels could help to inform and raise the level of debates involving adult, career-technical, and postsecondary education services generally, while also highlighting needed services for DACA and potential DREAM Act youth. Expanded capacity at the national level could help to illuminate and address important issues such as disparate impacts of state adult education eligibility rules on DACA applicants and eligibility of DACA youth for particular federal education and training programs and associated financial aid/grant supports.

- ***Communication and networking across the DACA, immigration policy, and adult education and training fields.*** The knowledge and energy of many thousands of potential actors on DACA-DREAM education success issues is currently contained within issue silos, with the DACA and immigration policy fields rarely engaging with those in adult, career-technical, and postsecondary education on issues of common concern. Establishing better communication and networking infrastructure across these fields at the local, state, and national levels can help to leverage the strengths of each field for greater impact.

D. Conclusion

The DACA program provides unauthorized young adults who entered the United States as children and have lived in the country for many years with protection from deportation during a critical time in their lives—a time when young adults the world over seek to complete their education or skills training, begin to work full-time, and more generally complete the transition from childhood to adult lives and responsibilities.

By requiring applicants to have a high school diploma or be enrolled in school, and with the entire class of DACA applicants likely to eventually face a two-year postsecondary education requirement under potential new laws, the program brings new urgency and stakeholders to efforts seeking to improve the educational success of Latino and immigrant young adults across the United States.

Making the most of this unprecedented opportunity to support significant education and skill gains by these youth requires the use of coordinated, multilevel strategies. The success of these efforts would benefit not only DACA youth and the communities in which they reside, but also accelerate education reforms—particularly those in the adult education and training field—bringing new vitality and know-how to programs that are a critical but often overlooked segment of the U.S. education pipeline.

I. Introduction

Based on the most recent application figures provided by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), 681,189, or roughly 37 percent, of the 1.8 million potentially eligible individuals over 15 years of age had applied for protection under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program as of July 20, 2014.⁷ While a variety of factors contribute to low application rates—including the costs associated with applying, concerns about revealing the immigration status of other family members, and lack of information about or recognition of one's eligibility to apply—it is also evident that a significant share does not meet the program's threshold education requirements: enrollment in a qualified education or training program or completion of a high school diploma for applicants ages 15 and over.⁸

⁷ There are a number of possible ways to calculate DACA application rates. See Batalova, Hooker, and Capps with Bachmeier, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*; USCIS, "DACA I-821D Accepted, Rejected, Receipts, Approvals, Denials from August 15, 2012 to July 20, 2014," unpublished data, on file with author.

⁸ USCIS, "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," updated August 15, 2014, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca#request-DACA.



Many policymakers, educators, and community leaders who seek to support the success of DACA youth are beginning to realize the high hurdles that these education requirements pose for individuals who would otherwise be eligible for the program. Potential applicants and their supporters have struggled to interpret the program's educational requirements and identify programs that will fulfill them. Understanding how such programs might connect with education and training pathways that lead to better jobs, higher wages, and longer-term employment stability and life prospects is an additional challenge.

Yet, DACA's education and training program enrollment requirements are far less rigorous than what may be required under future immigration reform legislation such as the DREAM Act: completion of two years of college.⁹ Those without a high school diploma or equivalent could even be excluded entirely from the class of individuals eligible to pursue legal permanent status under such a law. The high value of additional educational attainment for DACA and potential DREAM Act youth—both for their lifetime socioeconomic trajectory and potential eligibility for legal permanent residence—is driving heightened interest in efforts that can help improve the educational success of these youth. Such efforts are the subject of this report.

After providing a review of major sociodemographic characteristics of the potential DACA applicant pool, the report describes individual, program, and system needs that affect the educational success of key DACA youth subgroups. These sections are followed by recommendations for actions that can be taken to support the educational success of each of the major subgroups. While the report does not deal in great detail with the legal service supports individuals may need in order to apply for or renew protections under the program, these and connections to information and resources for paying application fees may be critical for many. These needs are often intertwined with the education needs that are the primary focus of this report; therefore, strategies to address them have been selectively included in this analysis.

II. Snapshots: Population Demographics and System Capacity

A series of data snapshots follow that describe key characteristics of DACA-eligible youth that are relevant to the design of outreach, education and training strategies for potential DACA applicants who might seek to progress to high school diplomas, postsecondary degrees, or high-value workforce credentials.

A. Age Distribution

Table 1 provides the age distribution of all potentially eligible DACA youth; these and much of the other census-based data in this section are drawn from an analysis conducted for a Migration Policy Institute (MPI) report marking the two-year anniversary of the DACA program.¹⁰

9 *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2011* (S. 952), 112th Cong. 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 157 no. 166 (November 2, 2011): S 7058, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112s952is/pdf/BILLS-112s952is.pdf.

10 Batalova, Hooker, and Capps with Bachmeier, *DACA at the Two-Year Mark*.

**Table 1. Age Distribution of the Potentially Eligible DACA Population, 2012**

Age at DACA Launch	Total Potentially Eligible (under age 31)	Immediately Eligible Individuals (ages 15-30; meet education criteria)	Individuals (ages 15-30) Who Did Not Appear to Meet Education Criteria	Children Eligible in the Future (under age 15)
Under 11	155,000	--	--	155,000
11 to 14	319,000	--	--	319,000
15 to 18	447,000	417,000	31,000	--
19 to 22	521,000	393,000	128,000	--
23 to 26	416,000	275,000	141,000	--
27 to 30	278,000	152,000	126,000	--
Total	2,136,000	1,236,000	426,000	473,000

Notes: Potentially eligible youth refer to those under age 30, including youth who met and who did not appear to meet the program's education criteria, and those who were not yet age 15 at the program's launch. *Immediately eligible* youth met both age and educational criteria (i.e., they were ages 15 to 30 and were either enrolled in school or had at least a high school diploma or its equivalent). *Youth who did not appear to meet educational requirements* are those ages 15 to 30 who did not have a high school diploma or equivalent and were not enrolled in school. *Children eligible in the future* appear to meet the program's requirements but were not yet age 15 at the time of the program's launch.

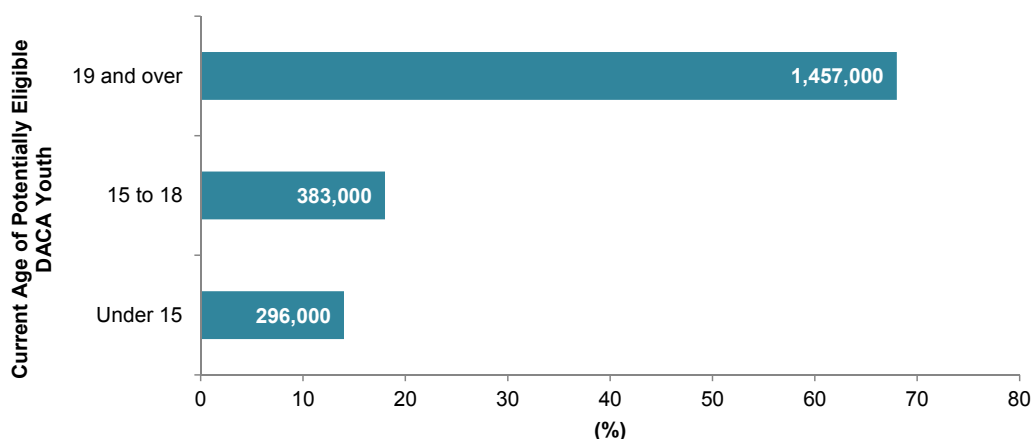
Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from James Bachmeier of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University, Population Research Institute from the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

MPI estimates that the overall number of potential DACA-eligible youth is 2.1 million (see Table 1). Approximately 1.2 million individuals ages 15-30, or 58 percent of all potential applicants, met the program's education criteria at the time it was launched and are therefore denoted as "immediately eligible" to apply; 426,000, or 20 percent of the overall applicant pool, appeared not to meet the education criteria; and an additional 473,000 youth (or 22 percent) were not yet age 15 at the time of the program's launch.

Our analysis was conducted using the most recently available (2012) U.S. Census Bureau data—also the year of DACA's launch. Since then, a significant number of potentially eligible youth have turned 15 and aged into application eligibility, while those who were between the ages of 15 and 18 at the time of the program's launch (178,000) have since graduated from high school or failed to do so. Figure 1 shows estimates of the current ages of these youth, accounting for the two years that have passed since the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) data were collected. As of 2014, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of the potentially eligible applicant pool is 19 and over, and therefore beyond compulsory school age. Just 18 percent are between the ages of 15 and 18, while an even smaller share—14 percent—is made up of children who may be eligible to apply in the future but are not yet age 15.

*MPI estimates that the overall number of potential
DACA-eligible youth is 2.1 million.*

Figure 1. Current Age of All Potentially Eligible DACA Youth, 2014



Source: MPI analysis of Bachmeier and Van Hook data from the 2012 ACS and 2008 SIPP.

B. Educational Attainment

Table 2 provides an overview of the educational attainment of youth who were immediately eligible to apply for DACA relief at the time of the program's launch based on their K-12 school enrollment or having already obtained at least a high school diploma.

Table 2. Educational Attainment of Potentially and Immediately Eligible Youth at DACA Launch, 2012

	Number Potentially Eligible	Share Potentially Eligible	Share Immediately Eligible
Under age 15	473,000	22	-
Ages 15 and over, no high school diploma or GED and not enrolled in school	426,000	20	-
Immediately eligible	1,236,000	58	100
Over age 15, enrolled in school	380,000	18	31
High school graduate/GED (not enrolled)	510,000	24	41
High school graduate/GED (enrolled in college)	247,000	12	20
Associate degree	43,000	2	3
Bachelor's degree	48,000	2	4
Advanced degree	9,000	0	1
Total	2,136,000	100	-

Notes: *Potentially eligible* youth refer to those under age 30, including youth who met and who did not appear to meet the program's education criteria, and those who were not yet age 15 at the program's launch. *Immediately eligible* youth met both age and educational criteria (i.e., they were ages 15 to 30 and were either enrolled in school or had at least a high school diploma or its equivalent).

Source: MPI analysis of Bachmeier and Van Hook data from the 2012 ACS and 2008 SIPP.

Of the 1.2 million individuals estimated to be eligible to apply immediately, the largest group by far was those with a high school diploma as the terminal degree, representing 41 percent of those in the immediately eligible group and 24 percent of all potential applicants. A substantial number of youth



with only a high school diploma or equivalent—12 percent of all potentially eligible applicants—were estimated to be enrolled in college. However, extremely low rates of college completion for Latino youth¹¹ and nontraditional college students¹² suggest a fairly low percentage of these youth will complete their degree without targeted and timely interventions to support their success.

Finally, an estimated 8 percent of the immediately eligible group (4 percent of all potential applicants at the time the program launched) had attained either an associate or higher degree. While each of these degrees is a significant accomplishment given the high hurdles these youth faced in acquiring a postsecondary education, the number is nevertheless quite low should potential DREAM Act-like requirements be adopted as part of future immigration reform. Overall, however, the large share of DACA-eligible youth who already have a high school diploma or are currently enrolled in college provides a ready pool of individuals who can be immediately targeted with supports that will assist them in preparing to meet potential DREAM Act requirements and in attaining postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials. These credentials will qualify them for middle- and high-skill jobs, allowing them to contribute more fully to their local economy and community, and providing economic stability and mobility for their families.

C. Family Income

An extensive research literature demonstrates the connection between family income and college completion.¹³ To assist stakeholders in understanding the challenges facing potential DACA and/or DREAM applicants in paying tuition or fees for education and training programs or college, or to afford wages lost as a result of attending such programs, Table 3 documents these youth's family incomes.

Table 3. Family Income as Share of Federal Poverty Level for Immediately and Potentially Eligible Individuals, 2012

Federal Poverty Level	Immediately Eligible Individuals (ages 15-30; meet education criteria)	Individuals (ages 15-30) Who Did Not Appear to Meet Education Criteria	Children Eligible in the Future (under age 15)	Share of Overall Potentially Eligible Population
Under 100%	416,000	169,000	239,000	39
100-199%	409,000	155,000	146,000	33
200% and over	411,000	101,000	89,000	28
Total	1,236,000	425,000	474,000	100

Notes: Potentially eligible youth refer to those under age 30, including youth who met and who did not appear to meet the program's education criteria, and those who were not yet age 15 at the program's launch. Immediately eligible youth met both age and educational criteria (i.e., they were ages 15 to 30 and were either enrolled in school or had at least a high school diploma or its equivalent). Youth who did not appear to meet educational requirements are those ages 15 to 30 who did not have a high school diploma or equivalent and were not enrolled in school. Children eligible in the future appear to meet the program's requirements but were not yet age 15 at the time of the program's launch.

Source: MPI analysis of Bachmeier and Van Hook data from the 2012 ACS and 2008 SIPP.

11 Excelencia in Education, *Latino College Completion: United States* (Washington, DC: Excelencia in Education, 2014), www.edexcelencia.org/sites/default/files/Exc2014-50StateFS-National.pdf.

12 Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, *Pathways to Success: Integrating Learning with Life and Work to Increase National College Completion* (Washington, DC: Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012), <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED529485.pdf>.

13 Thomas Bailey, Davis Jenkins, and Timothy Leinbach, *What We Know About Community College Low-Income and Minority Student Outcomes: Descriptive Statistics from National Surveys* (New York: Columbia University Teachers College Community College Research Center, 2005), <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/low-income-minority-completion.pdf>; Community College Research Center, "Charting Pathways to Completion for Low-Income Community College Students" (CCRC Working Paper No. 34, Columbia University, New York, September 2011), <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/charting-pathways-completion.pdf>.



At the time of DACA's launch, seven out of ten potential DACA applicants were members of families whose income was less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL): 39 percent, or 824,000, lived in families whose income was less than FPL and an additional 33 percent (710,000) were in families whose income was between 100 and 199 percent of FPL. With almost three-quarters of all potential DACA youth living in families making less than 200 percent of FPL and the strong connection between family income and college completion, it is obvious that strategies to support these youths' success must take into account the financial pressures they and their families experience. These will be addressed in greater detail later in this report.

D. English Proficiency and Education

Turning to pertinent sociodemographic characteristics of those who appear not to meet DACA's education eligibility criteria, we provide information on the levels of English proficiency and educational attainment reported by the 426,000 individuals, or 20 percent of the potentially eligible DACA population, who did not report school enrollment or possess a qualifying high school diploma or equivalent at the time of the program's launch (see Table 4).

Table 4. English Proficiency and Educational Attainment of Individuals Not Appearing to Meet Education Criteria

	Less than 9th Grade and Not Enrolled		9-12 Grade with No Diploma and Not Enrolled		All Youth with No High School Diploma and Not Enrolled	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Total	162,000	100	264,000	100	426,000	100
By English proficiency						
Speak only English	4,000	3	12,000	5	17,000	4
Speak English "very well"	16,000	10	97,000	37	113,000	27
Limited English proficient	141,000	87	155,000	59	296,000	69
Speak English "well"	26,000	16	74,000	28	99,000	23
Speak English "not well"	62,000	38	56,000	21	118,000	28
Speak English not at all	53,000	33	25,000	9	78,000	18

Source: MPI analysis of data from Bachmeier and Van Hook from the 2012 ACS and 2008 SIPP.

To qualify for DACA, these individuals must enroll in an adult education or workforce skills program that complies with the definitions set forth by USCIS.¹⁴ There appear to be two distinct subgroups within this population. One is the group of 162,000 individuals with no years of high school education—more than 70 percent of whom speak English not well or not at all. The second group is made up of the 264,000 individuals who have at least some years of high school education and are significantly more likely to speak English well or very well. A much smaller share—30 percent—reported speaking English not well or not at all.

¹⁴ To be considered "currently in school" DACA applicants must, according to USCIS guidelines, be enrolled in: (1) a public or private elementary school, junior high, or middle school, high school, or secondary school; (2) an education, literacy, or career training program (including vocational training) that is designed to lead to placement in postsecondary education, job training, or employment; or (3) an education program assisting students either in obtaining a regular high school diploma or its recognized equivalent under state law, or in passing a General Educational Development (GED) exam or other equivalent state-authorized exam. See USCIS, "Frequently Asked Questions," updated June 5, 2014, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions.



This grouping comports with the experiences of front-line staff who report serving individuals with two distinct profiles: 1) those who could qualify for DACA based on their age and date of arrival, but who have spent little or no time in U.S. schools, have low levels of education in their home country, and have low levels of English; and 2) those who spent at least several years in U.S. schools (if not all of their elementary and secondary schooling), but who left school without completing a diploma.

By standard convention, individuals who report speaking English less than very well are deemed to be Limited English Proficient (LEP).¹⁵ Table 4 shows that more than two-thirds of potential DACA applicants who lack a high school diploma or equivalent are also LEP. However, given the different characteristics of the two broad subgroups thought to exist within this population, the types of English language instructional support they might need could be vastly different. For example, a 20-year-old who spent ten years in U.S. schools but has gaps in English writing or speaking proficiency would require quite different English as a Second Language (ESL) or education programming than a 20-year-old who never attended U.S. schools and completed only five or eight years of education in his or her home country.

Strategies to address the variety of English and underlying education needs of these subgroups will be discussed later.

E. Gender

We demonstrate here another phenomenon widely remarked upon by those providing front-line services: the gender imbalance in both the overall potential DACA-eligible population and, more particularly, among those who were over age 15, lacked a high school diploma or equivalent and were not enrolled in school at the time of the program's launch (see Table 5).

Table 5. Gender of Individuals Not Appearing to Meet Education Criteria, 2012

Gender	Total Potentially Eligible Population (under age 31)		Youth (15-30) Who Did Not Appear to Meet Education Criteria	
	Estimate	Percent of total	Estimate	Percent of total
Women	972,000	46	162,000	38
Men	1,164,000	54	264,000	62
Total	2,136,000	100	426,000	100

Notes: Potentially eligible youth refer to those under age 30, including youth who met and who did not appear to meet the program's education criteria, and those who were not yet age 15 at the program's launch. Youth who did not appear to meet educational requirements are those ages 15 to 30 who did not have a high school diploma or equivalent and were not enrolled in school.

Source: MPI analysis of data from Bachmeier and Van Hook from the 2012 ACS and 2008 SIPP.

Men comprised 54 percent of the overall applicant pool and nearly two-thirds of those without a high school diploma or equivalent. While gender effects are important to consider in overall DACA application and renewal strategies, they are also particularly important in the educational attainment arena. Given lower average rates of high school and postsecondary degree attainment for Hispanic males,¹⁶ these data indicate a need to ensure that education outreach, instruction, and support strategies are specifically tailored to address the needs and goals of males. These shall be discussed later.

15 U.S. Census Bureau, *A Compass for Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What State and Local Governments Need to Know* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/handbooks/ACSstateLocal.pdf.

16 Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, *Up for Grabs: The Gains and Prospects of First- and Second-Generation Young Adults* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2011), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/prospects-first-second-generation-young-adults-up-for-grabs.



F. Top States of Residence

Turning to another critically important lens to view the experiences of DACA and potential DREAM Act youth, Table 6 provides a snapshot of potentially eligible individuals at DACA's launch, their top ten states of residence, and the most recent figures available (June 2014) from USCIS of applications accepted for residents of those states.¹⁷

Table 6. Top Ten States for Potential DACA Applicants and Applications Accepted by USCIS, 2012

State of Residence	Potentially Eligible Population (ages 15 to 30 at DACA launch)	State Share of All Potentially Eligible Individuals	Applications Accepted by USCIS through 6/30/14	Application Rate for Ages 15+ (%)
U.S. Total	1,662,000	100	675,476	41
California	507,000	30	196,131	39
Texas	223,000	13	112,283	50
Illinois	92,000	6	37,693	41
New York	91,000	5	35,606	39
Florida	90,000	5	28,789	32
New Jersey	60,000	4	19,422	32
Georgia	57,000	3	22,573	40
North Carolina	56,000	3	23,849	43
Arizona	47,000	3	24,642	52
Washington	33,000	2	14,890	46

Sources: MPI analysis of data from Bachmeier and Van Hook from the 2012 ACS and 2008 SIPP; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2014 Third Quarter," accessed August 22, 2014, www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/DACA_fy2014_qtr3.pdf.

The national and state-level estimates shown in Table 6 are based on MPI's analysis of population characteristics at the time of DACA's launch. In this report we use a national application rate that accounts for children who were not yet eligible to apply for the program when the 2012 ACS data were collected. Since then, 178,000 children who were 13 and 14 at DACA's launch in 2012 have now aged into eligibility. Adding these children to the total population of potentially eligible individuals who were over age 15 at the program's launch increases the estimate of the potentially eligible population from 1.7 million to 1.8 million. Using the most recent number of DACA applications accepted by USCIS nationally (681,189), we calculate that 37 percent of those who are now ages 15-32 and potentially eligible for DACA protections had applied as of July 20, 2014.¹⁸

As the table illustrates, California is the leading state of residence—with a 30 percent share—for potentially eligible DACA youth, followed by the other traditional immigrant-destination states of Texas, Illinois, New York, and Florida, which together account for another 30 percent of potentially eligible youth ages 15-30. Of the five remaining largest states of residence, three—Arizona, Georgia, and North Carolina—have battled over not only provision of in-state tuition to unauthorized youth (none of the

17 USCIS, "Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2014 Third Quarter," accessed August 22, 2014, www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/DACA_fy2014_qtr3.pdf.

18 Application data from USCIS is available at the state level through June 30, 2014. National-level data is available through July 20, 2014.



three provides it), but also the ability of these students to enroll in state postsecondary institutions.¹⁹ New Jersey and Washington, which both provide in-state tuition, round out the top ten.

The importance of state-level education policy and funding contexts to prospects for educational success of DACA-DREAM youth is discussed later in this report. Other MPI reports and data resources provide additional information on characteristics of potential DACA applicants in many cases at the state and county levels. These include data on indicators relevant to educational success efforts such as race and ethnicity—for example, Asian-origin applicants represent 8 percent of potential DACA applicants but 2 percent of those who were eligible but for meeting its education requirements, and significant differences exist in application rates among different Asian-origin groups.

G. Adult Education System Capacity

Other data provide important contextual information about the capacity of existing systems to meet the education and training needs of the DACA-DREAM population. Table 7 displays national adult education system enrollment data for the past six years.²⁰ It is divided into three program areas: Adult Basic Education (ABE), provided to those with less than an 8th grade education; Adult Secondary Education (ASE), typically provided to those preparing to obtain a high school diploma or equivalent; and ESL, also known as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Table 7. National Adult Education System Enrollment, 2007-12

School Year	ABE	ASE	ESL	Total Enrollment
2007 – 08	941,659	297,838	1,063,330	2,302,827
2008 – 09	1,004,658	307,823	1,051,570	2,364,051
2009 – 10	979,604	256,323	921,228	2,157,155
2010 – 11	921,374	230,163	838,581	1,990,118
2011 – 12	847,792	212,390	732,345	1,792,527
2012 – 13	819,465	193,979	676,767	1,690,211

Note: Data drawn from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education's National Reporting System, which includes reporting for U.S. territories and associated states. MPI has limited the data in this table to the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, National Reporting System: "State Enrollment by Program Type (ABE, ESL, ASE): All States," program years 2007-12.

Table 7 captures recent declines in the overall capacity of adult education programs due primarily to state budget cuts prompted by the Great Recession. Perhaps most significant was a 2009 decision by the California Legislature that allowed local school districts to use adult education funds for other purposes.²¹ Comparing 2007-08 figures to 2012-13, overall adult education enrollment declined by 612,616, or 27 percent, during this period. The largest numerical drop occurred in ESL enrollment, which dropped from 1,063,330 students to 676,767—a loss of 386,563 program slots, or 36 percent of prior capacity. ABE and ASE enrollment also suffered serious declines, dropping by 13 percent and 35 percent respectively during

¹⁹ Sarah Hooker, Michael Fix, and Margie McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia: Promoting High School and College Success for Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), <http://migrationpolicy.org/research/education-reform-changing-georgia-promoting-high-school-and-college-success-immigrant-youth>; National Conference of State Legislatures, "Undocumented Student Tuition: State Action," updated April 2014, www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-state-action.aspx.

²⁰ States reported these and other data to the U.S. Department of Education as part of the accountability system for the country's major adult education program and funding stream, codified under the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* (AEFLA), and set out in the second title of the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*.

²¹ Legislative Analyst's Office, *Restructuring California's Adult Education System* (Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst's Office, 2012), www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/edu/adult-education/restructuring-adult-education-120412.aspx.



the 2007-08 to 2012-13 period.²²

An additional, critical contextual factor when considering potential adult education needs of DACA-DREAM youth is the great mismatch between current system capacities and the apparent needs of all lower-educated U.S. adults. For example, roughly 395,000 DACA youth were ages 19 and over, lacked a high school diploma or equivalent, and were not enrolled in school when the program launched; as is evident in Table 7, their number is already double those served in all ASE programs nationally in 2012-13. In addition, they represent just 7 percent of the 5.7 million young adults in the United States ages 19-30 who lack a high school diploma or equivalent, many of whom also seek access to the limited slots available in adult education and training programs.²³

H. Program Enrollment Reported by Foreign-Born Adults with Low Educational Attainment

Table 8 displays the number of foreign-born individuals ages 18-64 with no high school diploma or equivalent and their reported enrollment in school (encompassing any program leading to a high school diploma or postsecondary degree) during the prior three months. Those with no years of high school (i.e. up to eight years of education) account for 60 percent of all immigrant adults with less than a high school education; less than one-half of 1 percent of them reported program enrollment. Slightly larger numbers of those with 9 to 11 years of underlying education reported program enrollment, with 8 percent having attended school during the prior three months.

Table 8. Immigrant Adults (ages 18-64) with No High School Diploma/Equivalent, by Years of Education and School Enrollment, 2010-12

Years of Education	School Attendance of Foreign-Born Adults		
	Not Enrolled in School	Enrolled in School	Total
0	1,031,400	--	1,031,400
1	75,100	--	75,100
2	185,100	--	185,100
3	356,400	--	356,400
4	274,800	--	274,800
5	378,300	2,500	380,800
6	1,985,800	5,900	1,991,700
7	363,400	4,800	368,200
8	762,900	12,000	775,000
9	1,312,000	23,200	1,335,200
10	683,100	41,200	724,200
11	1,624,200	212,400	1,836,600
Total	9,032,400	301,900	9,334,300

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's pooled 2010-12 American Community Survey.

One cannot draw conclusions about system capacity needs based on these data since it is not possible to know the educational goals of individual learners or how they might change if programming more relevant to their needs were to be available, nor the nature and length of services each learner might require.

22 MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education's National Reporting System: "State Enrollment by Program Type (ABE, ESL, ASE): All States," program years 2007-2012.

23 MPI analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS). For additional statistics on adult education system capacity and immigrant and refugee community needs, see Margie McHugh, *Adult Education Needs of U.S. Immigrants and Refugees and Recommendations to Improve the Federal Government's Response in Meeting Them* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014 forthcoming).



Despite these caveats, the data are a source of concern for those seeking to promote the educational success of potential DACA applicants: overall enrollment in programs that would help lower-educated individuals obtain a high school diploma or equivalent is extremely low, and those most likely to access services have the highest levels of high school attainment.

These findings reinforce the earlier observation that there appear to be two distinct subgroups within the potentially eligible DACA-DREAM pool that is lower-educated. System design issues that affect the educational access and progress of these subgroups, as well as the large group of potential applicants that possess a high school diploma but have not completed two years of postsecondary education, will be discussed next, along with approaches that are effective in meeting their needs.

III. Key Needs of DACA-DREAM Applicants and Programs Seeking to Assist Them

A wide range of factors can influence the ability of DACA- and potential DREAM Act-eligible individuals to access and complete education and training programs and thereby comply with immigration program requirements. These include the availability of slots in education programs that meet their goals, accessibility factors such as the times at which programs are offered, or the availability of transportation options, in addition to affordability factors such as lost wages due to attendance, child-care costs, and payment of program fees or tuition.

The ability of local programs to meet individual needs is shaped by policies and funding rules created by the wide range of local, state, and national authorities that have a hand in governing adult, workforce training, and postsecondary education programs. Differences in these policies and funding rules create significant variability in local system designs and greatly influence their ability to provide access to programs likely to be successful in meeting the needs of immigrant young adults.

The sections that follow provide brief discussions of the varied needs of individual DACA-DREAM youth, those of local programs and systems seeking to serve them, and the additional needs or constraints created by state and federal policy contexts. Where possible, promising approaches to meeting particular needs are noted.

A. Key Subgroups Needs

Three broad categories of DACA- and potential DREAM-eligible individuals are of concern from an education and training success standpoint:

- those who are under 19 years of age;
- those ages 19 and over who have not attained a high school diploma or equivalent; and
- those ages 19 and older who possess only a high school degree or equivalent and who are eligible for DACA but do not meet requirements for two years of postsecondary education contained in potential immigration reform measures.

I. Under age 19: 921,000, or 43 percent, of all potentially eligible individuals at program's launch.

Ideally these youth, most of whom can be presumed to be enrolled in U.S. elementary and secondary schools,



will remain enrolled, receive their high school diplomas, and be prepared to progress onward to complete at least two-year postsecondary degrees. Unfortunately, while DACA and potential DREAM Act measures may provide new encouragement for them to do so, past experience shows that many will drop out before obtaining their high school diploma.²⁴

Challenges in supporting youth in this age group to meet DACA and potential DREAM Act provisions include the poor quality of English Language Learner (ELL) educational services in many school districts, due to a lack of content area teachers trained in ESOL methodologies, of appropriate instructional practices for ELL subgroups such as long-term ELLs and students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), and a lack of access to the rigorous curriculum content necessary to meet graduation and high-stakes testing requirements.²⁵ In addition, schools these children attend are often characterized by general education services that are of poor quality, including less-qualified teachers, under-resourced schools, and limited access to school and career guidance services.²⁶

These youth may face limited access to information on the DACA program's legal and education requirements, or on the consequences of different education and training choices. Asian youth may face particularly high barriers to accessing information and services related to DACA.²⁷ In addition, certain high-profile programs intended to help high school youth obtain college credit through dual enrollment courses or workforce skills through career and technical education are often beyond the reach of DACA-DREAM youth due to English proficiency requirements, cost, transportation, immigration status, or other barriers.²⁸

Many DACA-DREAM youth also face education-success risks associated with their family's socioeconomic status. These include reduced access to health-care services, pressure felt by many youth to work and contribute to family resources, and more limited college and career knowledge, including information on scholarships and financial aid.²⁹ Service providers also face uncertainty regarding whether these youth are better reached with, without, or via their parents; each scenario poses its own logistical difficulties.

Promising practices and emerging models include:

- Several programs that provide outreach and immigration-related services at school sites have experienced success in reaching substantial numbers of eligible youth and their families.³⁰ A pre-existing initiative in New York City that brings both college counseling and consular services to immigrant families at school sites provided a foundation for DACA services at these

24 Hispanic young adults ages 18-24 have had a consistently lower high school completion rate than non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black young adults; for young adults age 16-24, the share of high school dropouts is highest among Hispanic youth. Forum on Child and Family Statistics, "High School Completion," accessed June 24, 2014, www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/edu4.asp; Thomas D. Snyder and Sally A. Dillow, *Digest of Education Statistics 2012* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2013), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014015.pdf>.

25 For example, see Deborah J. Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons, *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007), <http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/DoubletheWork.pdf>; Hooker, Fix, and McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia*.

26 Patricia Gándara, "Special Topic: The Latino Education Crisis," *Educational Leadership* 67, no. 5 (2010): 24-30, www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/The-Latino-Education-Crisis.aspx.

27 EunSook Lee, *Increasing Asian American and Pacific Islander DACA Participation: Overview of Grantmaking Recommendations*, April 2014, www.gcir.org/sites/default/files/resources/AAPi%20DACA%20Summary%20Brief%20Design.pdf.

28 Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, Michael Fix, and Randy Capps, *Shaping Our Futures: The Educational and Career Success of Washington State's Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2013), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shaping-our-futures-educational-and-career-success-washington-state%E2%80%99s-immigrant-youth; Hooker, Fix, and McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia*.

29 Ibid.

30 Tamar Galatzan, "Helping 'Dreamer' Students Succeed," *Galatzan Gazette*, April 18, 2013, www.galatzangazette.com/home1/2013/4/18/helping-dreamer-students-succeed.html; New York Legal Assistance Group, "Back-to-School: Immigration Law Help on Wheels" (NYLAG News, September 4, 2012), <http://nylag.org/news/2012/09/back-to-school-immigration-law-help-on-wheels>.



accessible, trusted, local sites.³¹

- Reaching high school guidance counselors with information about DACA's provisions both improves the accuracy of college counseling for youth and can open doors to low-cost legal services providers.³²
- Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) has been in the vanguard of efforts in California that seek to engage and assist secondary-school educators and administrators (primarily) in supporting successful high school to college transitions for DACA-DREAM youth; they sponsor a range of information, referral and other resources, including student scholarship programs.³³
- A number of organizations offer mentoring for high-school-age unauthorized youth to support their successful transition to college.³⁴

2. Ages 19 and over, no high school diploma/equivalent and not enrolled in school: 395,000, or 19 percent, of all potentially eligible individuals at program's launch.

The one in five potential DACA applicants who are ages 19 and over, were not enrolled in school at DACA's launch, and lack a high school diploma or equivalent are of significant concern since they face an additional hurdle in applying for DACA; they also could be at risk of exclusion from the class of individuals permitted to pursue legal permanent residence under future immigration reform measures. The DACA program requires them to demonstrate that they are enrolled in a qualifying adult education or training program in order to be eligible. A great deal of confusion has surrounded USCIS' published guidance addressing these provisions, leaving many individual applicants and service providers uncertain as to whether particular programs meet the agency's standards.

As demonstrated in the earlier data snapshots, these individuals can be considered to include two subpopulations that face different challenges based on their underlying educational attainment and life circumstances: those with little U.S. education experience and those with some U.S. high school experience.

a) *Little U.S. Education Experience*

A significant share of DACA- and potential DREAM-eligible youth entered the United States before they were age 16 and appear to have gone directly to work, often in agriculture and construction. Some have low or extremely low levels of formal education—less than an 8th grade or 5th grade education. They face multiple barriers to succeeding in existing adult education and workforce programs: they typically would be expected to spend several years in ESL programs, several more years in Adult Basic (or Secondary) Education programs, and only then gain access to high school equivalency, workforce training, and eventually postsecondary programs.

While some states are taking steps to integrate these adult education services, they primarily do so for students with an underlying 10th grade or 11th grade education and intermediate levels of English proficiency. Providing education in Spanish is an option in some states and under some programs. This

31 New York Immigration Coalition, "Issue Highlights: Family Engagement & Leadership," accessed April 20, 2014, www.thenyic.org/family-engagement.

32 Workshop presentations at the National Immigrant Integration Conference in Miami in 2013 by Catalina Kaiyoorawongs of Unidos Now and Julian Escutia-Rodriguez, representative of the Mexican Embassy; City of Chicago, "Mayor Emanuel Announce the Start of IL Dream Act Training for Counselors at Chicago Public Schools (press release, August 1, 2013), www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2013/august_2013/mayor_emanuel_announcethestartofildreamacttrainingforcounselorsa.html.

33 Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC), "About Us," accessed April 20, 2014, <http://e4fc.org/aboutus.html>.

34 CT Students for a DREAM, "College Access Program," accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.ct4adream.org/>.



offers a faster path to a high school diploma for Spanish-speaking adults dispirited by the prospect of spending ten-plus years in “go-nowhere” classes; however, relatively few such programs are available.

b) Some U.S. High School Experience

For the subpopulation that has completed some or most of high school, the difficulties in completing a high school degree or equivalent often are still high. Many young adults in this group are thought to have attended U.S. schools for a significant number of years, dropping out towards the end of high school for various reasons including pregnancy, a need to work, lack of credit attainment, or failure to complete high-stakes tests, or a combination of such factors. Responding to pressures to improve high school graduation rates, many local school districts are expanding high school equivalency (GED) and other dropout recovery programs. These aim to attract former students to complete diplomas and potentially move on to community college or workforce training programs. However, attending and persisting in such programs still requires substantial personal resources (to address lost wages and child care or transportation costs among others), access to programs that are aligned with learner goals (for example, a program offering skills that might appeal to young men already in the workforce), and that can address specific learner needs, such as foundational English writing skills for long-term ELLs.

Program and community leaders report that little information about DACA’s provisions has reached these two groups. Whether they have little U.S. education or some high school, these subpopulations are typically less connected to institutional providers and do not identify as DREAMers due to their lack of formal educational attainment. In addition, given the patchwork nature of adult education and workforce skills programs, as well as limited navigation or counseling assistance, it is extremely difficult for many young adults to obtain information about programs that meet their needs or goals or to determine their eligibility for enrollment.

Promising practices and emerging models include:

- DACA-youth focused programs rarely incorporate information to assist with adult education and workforce system navigation, or provide more tailored counseling on local programs that are best suited to an individual’s learning needs and goals. One on-campus model for such navigation assistance is the Highline Community College (Washington State) Transition and Referral Resource Center (TRRC), which was created specifically to support returning adult students, many of whom are immigrants and refugees. TRRC helps students navigate decisions about adult education and ESL classes they may need to take, helping them move efficiently through noncredit courses and more quickly achieve their goals of earning college credits towards an associate degree and/or transferring to four-year colleges.³⁵
- Providing a basic education curriculum in Spanish such as the *Plazas Comunitarias*³⁶ model developed by the Mexican government along with Spanish-language high school equivalency programs are important resources for lower-educated and LEP DACA applicants who are able/willing to pursue a high school equivalency diploma. However, it is important to note that many agricultural workers who settled in the United States in recent decades are not Spanish speakers but rather members of indigenous communities from Mexico and Central America who may need Basic Education in their Native Language (BENL) as part of integrated education and workforce skill programs.

35 Highline Community College, “Transition Referral and Resource Center Brochure,” accessed April 20, 2014, <http://transitioncenter.highline.edu/PDF/TRRCflyers.pdf>.

36 La Dirección General de Relaciones Internacionales de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, “Plazas Comunitarias y Educación para Adultos,” accessed April 20, 2014, www.mexterior.sep.gob.mx/2_pcea.htm; for English description, see Cobb County School District, “What is a Plaza Comunitaria?” accessed April 20, 2014, www.cobbk12.org/centraloffice/esol/iwc/PlazaComunitaria.aspx.



- Several institutions have moved beyond the sequential instruction model and sought to provide lower-educated and LEP individuals with opportunities to move more quickly in acquiring basic education, English, and workforce skills. These include the Center for Employment and Training in San Jose, California³⁷ and South Texas College's on-ramp programs to its health pathways and green construction programs.³⁸ Other systems have innovated in creating a competency-based diploma that allows adult students to demonstrate their qualifications directly rather than through seat-time in sequential levels of adult basic or secondary education. Washington State's High School 21+ Diploma³⁹ and Boston's Adult Diploma⁴⁰ are examples of competency-based diplomas being taken to scale.
- As mentioned earlier, many dropout recovery programs are operating in school districts across the United States, as K-12 districts (often relying on adult education dollars) seek to improve their graduation rates by scheduling more supportive and flexible programs to help youth complete their high school diplomas.⁴¹ For higher-educated individuals and those with intermediate or better levels of English proficiency, Washington State's nationally recognized I-BEST model⁴² is also of relevance, providing integrated adult secondary education and skills training in classes that are team-taught by adult education and skills instructors. These programs have proven successful in giving individuals who are LEP and/or lack a high school diploma access to credit-bearing courses, thereby accelerating their progress to employer-recognized credentials and postsecondary degrees.
- Given the gender imbalance in the potentially eligible DACA pool, ensuring that adult education programs are accessible and relevant to the needs of young men is a key concern; program times that accommodate work schedules and provide training directly relevant to work skills and advancement are important design elements generally in meeting the needs of low-educated students who are already in the workforce.⁴³

3. Ages 19 and over, with only a high school diploma/equivalent.

This large subgroup presents a prime investment opportunity, not just for those concerned with immigration policy and immigrant integration, but also those focused on college access and completion. Increasingly these fields seek strategies to boost completion of two- and four-year degrees, particularly by Latino and low-income youth, as part of broader efforts to meet the ambitious, national college-completion goals set forth by President Obama and numerous foundation and state-level initiatives.

Though individuals in this group have obtained their high school diploma or equivalent, and thus already meet the basic DACA educational requirements, many face a difficult path if they are to meet the two-year college attainment requirements that have been contained in prior DREAM Act legislation, and which appear likely to be included in future immigration reform legislation. For example, just 21 percent of Latino young adults ages 25 to 34 in 2012 had completed a two- or four-year college degree

37 Center for Employment and Training, "Training Students for Real Jobs," accessed April 20, 2014, <http://cetweb.org/>.

38 South Texas College, *Annual Grant Report* (McAllen, TX: South Texas College, 2011), 8, http://admin.southtexascollege.edu/grant_development/plans/pdf/Annual%20Grant%20Report%20January%202011%20-%20FINAL%20Draft%20-%2002-02-2011.pdf.

39 Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, "High School 21+: A competency-based diploma for adults," November 2013, www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/documents/HS21_11_12_13_final.pdf.

40 Boston Public Schools, Department of Adult Education and Community Services, "Adult Diploma Program (ADP)," accessed April 20, 2014, [http://boston.k12.ma.us/adulted/Adult_Diploma_Program_\(ADP\).html](http://boston.k12.ma.us/adulted/Adult_Diploma_Program_(ADP).html).

41 McHugh, *Adult Education Needs of U.S. Immigrants and Refugees and Recommendations to Improve the Federal Government's Response in Meeting Them*.

42 Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, "Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)," updated February 12, 2014, www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_integratedbasiceducationandskillstraining.aspx.

43 Julie Strawn, "Farther Faster: Six Promising Programs Show How Career Pathway Bridges Help Basic Skills Students Earn Credentials That Matter" (Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC, 2011), 4-5, www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/Farther-Faster.pdf.



and only 21 percent of low-income young adults (25-34) had done so.⁴⁴ A 2010 MPI report analyzed the difficulties that many potential DREAM-eligible youth would face in meeting the program's educational requirements, estimating that only 38 percent of the roughly 2 million potentially eligible pool would ultimately succeed in meeting the bill's requirements for legal permanent residence.⁴⁵

Most of the young adults in this group would be considered nontraditional college students, meaning that they are likely to be employed, low-income, parents of young children, and/or the first in their families to attend college. A significant and growing body of research is demonstrating effective policies and practices that can support these students' success, including provision of more intensive academic counseling and support, financial aid for part-time students, and reforms of placement testing and remedial education practices.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, college access and completion reform initiatives often overlook unique needs of immigrant youth, including the gaps in English literacy that can trap them in remediation programs that sap their resources and resolve.

Many in this group will require motivational and practical information about how to return to school and succeed in obtaining the advanced credentials and degrees that will qualify them for not only higher-paying jobs, but potentially also a more secure immigration status should DREAM Act-like provisions become law. These youth also need detailed information on local program opportunities as well as navigation assistance in choosing postsecondary programs with a record of success in meeting the needs of students with similar goals and needs.

Promising practices and emerging models include:

- Given the high hurdle that college costs pose for these youth, a full range of college affordability strategies is important, including efforts extending eligibility for Pell grants, in-state tuition, and state grant programs; provision of private and institutional scholarships; and the expansion of such supports to part-time students. In addition, support for books, child care, and transportation expenses as well as work-study opportunities are critical in making program attendance affordable.
- So-called bridge programs, such as those developed over the past decade through the efforts of Illinois' Community College Board and Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, explicitly seek to bridge the gaps in preparation faced by adults who seek to pursue credentials for high-demand middle-skill jobs but have deficits in their English proficiency or need targeted remediation in order to succeed in college courses.⁴⁷ Career development and navigation supports are core elements of program design, providing students with information about the knowledge and skills required for occupations within broad industry clusters (e.g. health, manufacturing) and a range of advising and coaching services to support student persistence and pathway completion.⁴⁸
- Supporting nontraditional or at-risk students through a learning community, in which a

44 Author's analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 ACS.

45 Jeanne Batalova and Margie McHugh, *DREAM vs. Reality: An Analysis of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2010), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dream-vs-reality-analysis-potential-dream-act-beneficiaries. The report also projects a low number of potential DREAM Act youth qualifying for permanent residence via military service due in part to the relatively high levels of basic education and English proficiency recruits by all branches of the military.

46 See Richard Kazis, Abigail Callahan, Chris Davidson, Annie McLeod, Brian Bosworth, Vickie Choitz, and John Hoops, "Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies to Improve Results" (Employment and Training Administration Occasional Paper 2007-03, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC, March 2007), www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/adultlearners.dol.pdf; Rachel Pleasants McDonnell and Lisa Soricone with Monique Sheen, *Promoting Persistence Through Comprehensive Student Supports* (Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 2014), www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Promoting-Persistence-Through-Comprehensive-Student-Supports%20_031814.pdf.

47 Illinois Bridge Initiative Leadership Partners, *Creating a Successful Bridge Program, A "How To" Guide* (Springfield, IL: Illinois Community College Board, 2012), www.iccb.org/pdf/shiftinggears/iccb_2012bridgeguide_web_rev_oct2012.pdf.

48 Ibid, 8.



small group of students take linked courses that share common themes, is proving to be an effective model for helping students persist through remedial courses and credit attainment. Lessons from models such as the “Opening Doors” learning communities that were created at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York⁴⁹ or the Metro Academy Initiative created by City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University⁵⁰ can be adapted for DACA-DREAM youth.

- To address the serious problems many immigrant-origin youth face in acquiring the English literacy skills needed to succeed in college, some institutions provide tailored instruction that targets students’ specific academic English needs, thereby accelerating their progress from noncredit to credit-bearing courses. For example, Miami-Dade College’s Project ACE⁵¹ has sought to provide a model for content-based “English for Academic Purposes Instruction” and Westchester (NY) Community College’s ESL Institute has similarly innovated in its assessment, placement and course designs to provide English for Academic Purposes courses for ESL students seeking to complete college degrees.⁵²

Before turning to a discussion of system-level needs, it is worth noting that many local leaders and service providers report that potential DACA-DREAM youth who live in rural (sometimes even suburban) areas face particularly high barriers to progressing in their education. The provision of web-based information and resources alone is reported to be insufficient to engage or support these individuals in accessing or persisting in education programs that would allow them to qualify for DACA or future DREAM Act protections.⁵³

B. Program- and System-Level Needs

While it might be possible to meet a large portion of DACA and potential DREAM applicants’ information and legal services needs through privately funded initiatives, meeting the multiyear and highly varied nature of their adult, workforce, and postsecondary education needs will require local programs and systems that have the capacity and know-how to serve them. Local programs may need policy leeway, technical assistance, and/or funding support in order to provide the types of supports and integrated instruction that DACA-DREAM and other nontraditional students need in order to obtain credentials and degrees. State and local systems may similarly need exposure to innovations happening across the country, policy leeway, and/or additional funds to speed adoption of needed improvements.

For example, front-line adult education programs are commonly criticized for not offering rigorous or relevant content, separating language, literacy, and workplace skill instruction, being slow adopters of technology, and so on. Some of these weaknesses are the inevitable outcomes of national system design flaws. Others may result from the lack of a stable, professionalized workforce, given that so many programs operate using part-time staff and with little funding for paid professional development time. Whatever the cause, adopting more effective instructional practices and program models in order to meet the varied needs of DACA-DREAM students will likely require capacity building for both instructional and management staff.

In addition, counseling and navigation support is a critical missing element in the overall design of adult education and training systems. Unlike the “for-credit” postsecondary system which provides extensive

49 Dan Bloom and Colleen Somo, *Building Learning Communities: Early Results from the Opening Doors Demonstration at Kingsborough Community College* (New York: MDRC, 2005), www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_36.pdf.

50 Metro Academies Initiative, “The Metro Academies Initiative: Increasing College Completion through a Redesign of the First Two Years” (online brochure, accessed September 10, 2014), <http://metroacademies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Brochure-Email-Version.pdf>.

51 Miami Dade College, “Accelerated Content-Based English,” accessed April 20, 2014, www.mdc.edu/iac/esl/ace/.

52 Westchester Community College, “English Language Institute: Fall 2013,” accessed April 20, 2014, www.sunywcc.edu/cms/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/fall2013ELI.pdf.

53 Notes from Consultation Session on the Adult Education Needs of Immigrants and Refugees. Hosted by the Central Valley DACA Collaborative and the Werner-Kohnstamm Family Giving Fund in collaboration with MPI. Fresno, CA, March 14, 2014.



academic and career counseling to support student success, adult education is funded and organized as a menu of classes in which students enroll on an ad hoc basis. While many local programs recognize the need to provide academic counseling or some form of case management to students, they face other urgent and competing priorities, as well as unmet basic operating costs to which their unrestricted dollars are most often directed.

At a more macro level, a top challenge for those seeking to improve access to services in these fields is the disorganization of adult education and training service provision. Instructional levels may not be aligned from one program to the next, education and training services usually operate in silos, reinforcing the “go-slow” sequential model, and local services often exist as a hodge-podge of disconnected offerings that fail to offer transparent connections and progressions.

Promising practices and emerging models include:

- Thanks in part to the leeway its charter school status provides, the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School in Washington, DC provides award-winning adult education and workforce training programs aligned with in-demand jobs in the National Capital region. Its counseling, life skills, and other supports help immigrant young adults balance their family, education, and employment responsibilities, while its high-quality instructional practices help more than 3,000 students annually in day and evening classes learn English, obtain their high school equivalency, and complete industry-recognized training for well-paid, career-pathway jobs.⁵⁴
- The New York City Council created an \$18 million initiative to support lower-educated DACA individuals in accessing information, legal services, and adult education programs that would qualify them for DACA. The initiative, the most ambitious of its kind in the county, brings together three strands of service providers through scores of contracts in order to more comprehensively meet the needs of potential DACA applicants with adult education needs.⁵⁵ The Initiative also provides significant funding to the City University of New York (CUNY) to provide targeted professional development to the system’s ESL teachers in order to prepare them to accelerate DACA youth into credit-bearing courses.
- The Central Valley DACA Collaborative has played a critical role in identifying and coordinating efforts of key community and institutional partners to meet the needs of the very large and underserved pool of potential DACA applicants that lives and works in California’s Central Valley. Partners in the initiative are working to address the adult education and legal services needs of all DACA subgroups, particularly youth who are still enrolled in high school and lower-educated immigrants from indigenous communities in Mexico and Central America.
- The ALLIES project, supported by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, has sought over the past several years to bring together a wide range of adult education, workforce, and postsecondary providers in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties (California) in an effort to better align system services, improve the quality and relevance of services for immigrant clients, and focus the system on better preparing workers for in-demand jobs in the region.⁵⁶

While deeper instructional program and system change needs at the high school level were not discussed

54 MPI, “Nation’s First Adult-Focused Charter School, Based in Washington, D.C., Earns National Award for Exceptional Immigrant Integration Initiatives” (press release, December 4, 2013), www.migrationinformation.org/news/carlos-rosario-international-charter-school-EPUP.

55 Jennifer Fermino, “NYC to Shell Out \$18M to Help Undocumented Immigrants Get Jobs,” *New York Daily News*, July 17, 2013, www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-shell-18m-aid-immigrant-youths-article-1.1400673.

56 Kris Stadelman and Ursula Bischoff, “A Social Impact Initiative Supporting English Learners to Succeed in Family-Sustaining Careers,” (presentation, National Association of Workforce Boards Annual Forum, Washington, DC March 2014), www.nawb.org/forum/documents/Workshops/SVA_NAWB_Forum2014.pdf.



above, a great deal has been written—including by MPI—⁵⁷about the nature of reforms that are needed. Three, broad-based, community-driven projects of note focus on improving the quality of education provided to immigrant and ELL youth, including DACA-DREAM youth. They are the *Road Map Project* in South King County, Washington for which the immigrant-advocacy organization OneAmerica is a key partner;⁵⁸ the IMPACT Education Collaborative project in New York City that is coordinated by the New York Immigration Coalition;⁵⁹ and Californians Together, a statewide coalition leading efforts for ELL education improvements.⁶⁰

C. State Policy Contexts

State secondary, adult, and postsecondary policies and funding play a critical role in shaping quality and, at the postsecondary level, access to services for DACA-DREAM individuals. Current developments in the adult education systems in California, Texas, and Georgia demonstrate the wide variation in policy contexts facing DACA youth depending on where they reside, as well as the stresses adult education service systems face in several states that are home to the largest number of potential DACA applicants.

I. California

California is the top state of residence for potential DACA applicants ages 15-30 (507,000) but its adult schools have suffered a dramatic decline over the past five years. A 2009 decision by the California Legislature allowed local school districts to use state funds previously allocated for adult education services for other purposes, leading to mass redirection of funds to students in grades K-12 instead of adult learners.⁶¹

Both urban and rural areas have been hard hit: while programs like those run by the Los Angeles Unified School District are operating at greatly reduced capacity, some schools in rural and agricultural areas have closed outright, leaving no service availability at all.⁶²

Before taking steps to incrementally increase current capacity, the state has set into motion a restructuring process that seeks to rationalize local service provision and reduce overlap that may exist between adult school programs and noncredit basic skills courses offered by some community colleges. The governor's office has indicated that it intends to unify system governance under the state's Community College Chancellor's Office as part of this process; whether or not the K-12 system will also receive dedicated funds for adult education beyond fiscal year 2014 remains to be seen.⁶³ State legislation passed in 2013 (AB86) provided \$25 million for institutions from the two systems to engage in regional planning efforts in order to create better-coordinated service delivery systems. Future funding levels will be set by the governor and state legislators based on a review of regional adult education consortia plans (due March 15, 2015) by the state's education department and community college system.

In the short term the decimation of adult education programming in many parts of the state has made it more difficult for potentially eligible youth to enroll in education programs that would allow them to

⁵⁷ See, for example, Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, and Michael Fix, *Critical Choices in Post-Recession California: Investing in the Educational and Career Success of Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/critical-choices-post-recession-california-educational-career-success-immigrant-youth; Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping Our Futures*; Hooker, Fix, and McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia*.

⁵⁸ OneAmerica, "The Road Map Project ELL Work Group," accessed April 20, 2014, www.weareoneamerica.org/road-map-project-ell-work-group.

⁵⁹ New York Immigration Coalition, "Issue Highlights: Education Collaborative," accessed April 20, 2014, www.thenyic.org/education-collaborative.

⁶⁰ Californians Together, "Welcome," accessed April 20, 2014, www.californiantogether.org/.

⁶¹ Margaret Weston, *California's New School Funding Flexibility* (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2011), www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_511MWR.pdf.

⁶² McHugh, *Adult Education Needs of U.S. Immigrants and Refugees*.

⁶³ California Council for Adult Education, "Legislative News," accessed September 10, 2014, www.ccaestate.org/legislativenews.html.



qualify for DACA. As the state's restructuring process proceeds, broader concerns have also been raised about the ability of community colleges to effectively expand their role in providing adult education services and their accessibility to adult students, including immigrants.⁶⁴ Looking ahead as potential new investments are directed through local community colleges, a preference for investments in "higher-payoff" programs that promote high school diploma completion and postsecondary transitions is anticipated (planning for seamless transitions across such programs is a central tenet of the legislation). While these are laudable aims and in fact could benefit many better-prepared DACA-DREAM youth, such an outcome would fail to provide the on-ramps of basic skills and ESL instruction that many lower-educated and/or LEP individuals would need before they could access higher-payoff programs.

As this historic restructuring of state investments unfolds, the implications for the educational success of DACA-DREAM youth (and immigrant integration more broadly) are great. Yet, these issues have little visibility in the state's education policy and budget debates, due to the limited number and capacity of organizations that focus on adult education and training issues generally, and their importance to DACA youth and other immigrants in particular.

2. Texas

Despite the presence of a large number of adult residents who lack a high school diploma or equivalent and/or who are LEP,⁶⁵ Texas invests a relatively small amount in adult education services—for example, less than 3 percent of adults who lack a high school diploma and 4 percent of those who are LEP were enrolled in its adult education classes in 2012-13.⁶⁶

However, state leaders have articulated a strong interest in maintaining a positive climate for new and existing businesses, and state economic development and other agencies have in turn emphasized meeting the projected worker-skill needs of employers in key sectors of the economy. These priorities have led to an embrace of accelerated instructional models such as I-BEST that seek to support adult learners in quickly gaining relevant language, skills, and education.⁶⁷ Desire for greater alignment around these goals led to a 2013 law⁶⁸ that moved adult education from the Texas Education Agency to the state's Workforce Commission.

As adult education services are integrated into Texas Workforce Commission programming, these funds have been competitively rebid for the first time in ten years. The process has created great uncertainty among system providers, and has raised concerns about the potential for the reorganization to further restrict service access for lower-educated and LEP individuals.

There is much at stake for the state's 223,000 potentially eligible DACA youth (ages 15 and over at DACA's launch), along with other segments of the immigrant population that can benefit from the availability of adult education and training services. However, prospects for improving the state's weak record of investment in these services do not appear promising given the lack of strong stakeholder voices at the community level or in the policy arena.

64 Kate Murphy, "Adult Education's Fate in Limbo in California," *San Jose Mercury News*, March 3, 2013, www.mercurynews.com/ci_22752651/adult-educations-fate-limbo-california; see also Mac Taylor, *The 2013-14 Budget: Proposition 98 Education Analysis* (Sacramento: Legislative Analyst's Office, 2013), www.lao.ca.gov/analysis/2013/education/prop-98/prop-98-022113.pdf.

65 Roughly 2,719,700 Texas adults ages 18-64 lack a high school diploma or equivalent and 2,475,500 are Limited English Proficient (LEP). More than 1.3 million are both low-educated and LEP. MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's pooled 2010 and 2012 ACS.

66 Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education: National Reporting System, "State Enrollment by Program Type (ABE, ASE, ESL)," and MPI analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's pooled 2010-12 ACS.

67 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "Accelerate TEXAS," accessed April 21, 2014, www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=7688161B-C242-A060-8CA8584BFC6AF448.

68 Texas Senate Bill 307, 83th Legislature (April 22, 2013), www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/83R/billtext/pdf/SB00307E.pdf#navpanes=0.



3. Georgia

Georgia is home to an estimated 57,000 potential DACA applicants (ages 15 and over at DACA's launch). While its state law, HB87,⁶⁹ gained national attention for its severe immigration enforcement-related provisions and penalties, Georgia has also taken quite significant steps over the past several years to limit unauthorized immigrants' access to postsecondary and adult education programs. Its bans on in-state tuition and bars on admission for unauthorized youth in the state have rendered higher education largely unattainable.⁷⁰

The state has even gone so far as to ban enrollment by unauthorized individuals in adult education classes (Arizona is the only other state with such a policy in place). This is a substantial obstacle to meeting DACA's requirements for potentially eligible individuals who do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent.

Though federal adult education funds are popularly understood to not be subject to immigration status restrictions (at the federal level they are not), the U.S. Department of Education allows states to place legal status restrictions on their use if they choose to do so. Lower-educated potential DACA applicants in Georgia and Arizona are therefore at an obvious disadvantage in applying for the DACA program's benefits based on their state of residence.

D. Gaps in Federal Policy Coordination

At the national level, federal agencies have not appeared to pay much attention to the disadvantage that thousands of potential DACA applicants face based on prohibitions some states have placed on federally funded adult education services.

The lack of understanding or focus on this particular issue is indicative of the confusion created by the DACA program's unusual position at an intersection of two distinct government systems and policy fields. The capacities needed to more effectively address issues at the intersection of immigration and education policies must be built both within and outside the federal government. These include development of immigration policy and program expertise by leaders in the workforce training and adult, career, technical, and postsecondary education fields; similarly, immigration policy leaders will need to develop expertise in the design of education and workforce training systems and current policy and funding issues affecting them. These competencies will help both groups to address specific cross-cutting DACA policy concerns such as:

- Continued uncertainty around programs that meet the requirements for those who must demonstrate that they are “enrolled in school” to qualify for DACA protections.
- Present and future questions related to the eligibility of DACA-DREAM individuals for Pell grants, programs funded with workforce training funds, and other programs that could support their education and skill attainment.
- The vulnerability of potential DACA applicants and of the DACA program to abuse—for example, by entities which falsely claim they are a qualifying program, or by individuals who falsely claim enrollment in a qualifying program.

69 *Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011*, HB 87, Georgia General Assembly, 2011-12 regular session, www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/20112012/116631.pdf.

70 Hooker, Fix, and McHugh, *Education Reform in a Changing Georgia*.



IV. Lessons and Recommendations

The earlier discussion of subpopulation needs began by noting the wide range of factors that can influence the ability of DACA-DREAM youth to access and complete education and training programs, and how these factors are in turn influenced by policy and funding regulations created by national, state, and local governments. These result in diverse local system designs and approaches that defy easy description or use of common change strategies. Nevertheless, the broad outlines of system reform efforts have taken shape, and groundbreaking work is taking place in many parts of the United States to improve the educational attainment of nontraditional or under-represented students, including first- and second-generation immigrant youth.

Numerous states have demonstrated that they mean for unauthorized young immigrants to benefit from these reforms and have the opportunity to make their way to two- and four-year college degrees—more than three-quarters of DACA youth reside in states that have in-state tuition or other college-tuition equity policies, for example. These important policies notwithstanding, there are still many areas of leakage in the education pipeline on the way to postsecondary degree completion, and attempting to bring reforms or program models to scale in any of the key components of the pipeline is a complex undertaking.

Numerous states have demonstrated that they mean for unauthorized young immigrants to...make their way to two- and four-year college degrees.

Drawing lessons from promising practices described throughout the report, and recognizing the multilevel nature of change strategies needed, recommendations to address the education-success needs of DACA-DREAM youth at the individual, program, system, and field levels are provided here.

Actions that policymakers, education programs, community leaders, private funders, and other stakeholders can take include:

- I. **Address individual needs for basic information, system navigation, and financial resources to support program participation.**
 - **Create well-tailored information and marketing resources that address the intersection of DACA with educational attainment challenges for young adults in the three key subgroups.** For those under age 19 these efforts should provide a motivational message to stay in school, apply for DACA and obtain a two-year postsecondary degree, while also leading students to tailored, one-stop information resources on college access and success. Those ages 19 and over without a high school diploma or equivalent require marketing that will help them to self-identify as DACA eligible, and provide “how-to” advice for overcoming the multiple barriers they face to program enrollment and completion. For those ages 19 and over with only a high school diploma or equivalent, targeted marketing and information resources should point to the personal and potential immigration-related benefits of pursuing postsecondary education now, and guide these nontraditional college students to “bridge” or other programs that can prepare them for the rigors of college study; they should also address specific concerns related to the patchwork of financial aid, scholarships, and other supports available to unauthorized immigrant youth pursuing postsecondary education in a given state. Marketing to all subgroups should include messaging that appeals specifically to young men, reflecting also occupations and career paths likely to interest them.



- ***Provide personalized guidance and navigation support at the front end of adult education programs so individuals obtain the information and advice they need to make informed class enrollment and “pathway” choices.*** While this type of guidance is understood to be needed in both the high school and community college contexts, it is not part of the federal-state adult education program model, where it is especially needed by those who are undereducated and have multiple barriers to program participation. Such specialized guidance is very important for individuals who may have been out of school for many years, have specific rather than general gaps in their English language literacy skills, and/or whose postsecondary transition goals require selection of non-credit courses that will speed rather than impede their education progress. Mentoring programs would likely also prove valuable for DACA adult learners who face complex and potentially lengthy education pathways.
- ***Expand programs that make participation in adult education and training or postsecondary education more affordable for low-income DACA youth.*** Costs associated with program attendance and/or tuition and fees loom large for DACA youth and are a frequently cited barrier to program enrollment and persistence. Providing scholarships or grants to adult learners to pay for child care or transportation costs (e.g. through a fund administered by local programs) or programs that offer learning or work stipends could help make program attendance affordable for working, low-income young adults. Addressing the range of financial barriers to postsecondary education via efforts to expand availability of scholarships and grants for full-time and part-time students that address both tuition and other expenses associated with costs of study are also essential.

2. Address targeted program improvement and system coordination needs in the adult, career-technical, and postsecondary education arenas.

- ***System coordination initiatives that begin with mapping education service sufficiency for DACA-DREAM individuals are a logical starting point for identifying system strengths and weaknesses and priority areas for investment.*** These efforts can engage the full range of providers and stakeholders in a local area; they can also focus more narrowly on key education providers—addressing, for example, alignment of course content and credit across local adult education and community college programs, or facilitating early enrollment of high school seniors in local community colleges.
- ***Programs that are proving to be more effective in assisting nontraditional adult students in obtaining high school equivalency diplomas, industry-recognized credentials, and postsecondary degrees can be adapted and expanded with an eye to the needs of DACA youth participants.*** These include bridge programs to accelerate high school equivalency attainment and successful postsecondary transition⁷¹ and I-BEST-like programs that integrate noncredit ESL or basic education instruction with college-credit courses.⁷² In addition, Spanish-language GED/high school equivalency programs will result in quicker basic education progress for Spanish-speakers who are low-educated and LEP.
- ***Maximize public library capacities to meet DACA-DREAM youth needs.*** In many parts of the country, libraries are the most accessible literacy-focused provider available to meet needs. Supporting local libraries in providing a suite of relevant resources—for example, distance learning, high school equivalency exam practice, and information on local service providers—could help many DACA youth chart a path to achieving their education goals.

71 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, *Promoting College and Career Readiness: Bridge Programs for Low-Skill Adults* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2012), www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/brief-1-bridge-programs.pdf.

72 John Wachen, Davis Jenkins, and Michelle Van Noy, *How I-BEST Works: Findings from a Field Study of Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program* (New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2010), <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/how-i-best-works-findings.pdf>.



3. Address field-building needs.

Adult education and training services are the weakest and most vulnerable portion of the education pipeline, yet they are the cornerstone of effective immigrant integration efforts. Key field capacities that would need to be strengthened in order to support the educational success of DACA and potential DREAM Act youth who have not yet completed high school diplomas or two years of college include:

- **Research and policy analysis.** Expanded research and policy analysis capacity at the state and local levels could help to inform and raise the level of debates involving adult, career-technical, and postsecondary education services generally, while also highlighting needed services for DACA and potential DREAM Act youth. Expanded capacity at the national level could help to illuminate and address important issues such as disparate impacts of state adult education eligibility rules on DACA applicants and eligibility of DACA youth for particular federal education and training programs and associated financial aid/grant supports.
- **Communication and networking across the DACA, immigration policy, and adult education and training fields.** The knowledge and energy of many thousands of potential actors on DACA-DREAM education success issues is currently bottled up inside issue silos, with the DACA and immigration policy fields rarely engaging with those in adult, career-technical, and postsecondary education on issues of common concern. Establishing better communication and networking infrastructure across these fields at the local, state, and national levels can help to leverage the strengths of each field for greater impact.

V. Conclusion

DACA-DREAM youth occupy a unique position in the immigration reform debate, in part because the urgency of their need is easy for most to grasp—they are passing through a period in their lives when barriers to their educational progress can have lifelong implications. Their socioeconomic trajectory and that of their children will be shaped by the education and skills they acquire now, as will their ability to contribute over a lifetime in their workplaces and local community.

DACA-DREAM youth are a relatively small population within the larger universe of young adults in the United States who face barriers to two- and four-year degrees.

They are unique also due to the unprecedented requirement they face to provide a high school diploma or demonstrate enrollment in school in order to qualify for DACA protections; this education-attainment threshold for immigration relief will likely be raised dramatically should DREAM Act provisions become law. These requirements present obvious and difficult challenges for many potential applicants and the education and training systems that serve them.

Nevertheless, DACA-DREAM youth are a relatively small population within the larger universe of young adults in the United States who face barriers to two- and four-year degrees, and policies and programs effective in supporting their success have many of the same design elements as those for other at-risk populations.



As a result, just as nascent reform efforts in many local systems can be leveraged for better outcomes for DACA-DREAM youth, so too can efforts motivated by support for DACA-DREAM youth benefit other at-risk groups.

Though DACA's education requirements and those anticipated in future laws push both immigration policy and domestic education providers into uncomfortable and uncharted territory, they also bring new urgency and new stakeholders to efforts seeking to improve the educational success of Latino and immigrant young adults across the United States. Harnessing this momentum holds great promise for accelerating overdue reforms and bringing to scale more effective adult education and training approaches that can both support DACA-DREAM youth in achieving significant education and skill gains and bring new vitality and know-how to segments of the U.S. education pipeline that are critical to our nation's success.



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The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

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