

Health Coverage Options for DACA Recipients



This handout is for assisters working directly with clients to help explain health coverage options for DACA recipients.

Updated January 2022.



Program Overview

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a program for people who came to the U.S. as children without documentation. The program allows eligible individuals to request a legal status to stay in the U.S. temporarily. DACA recipients are eligible for work authorization, a Social Security Number, and a driver's license. DACA does not create a pathway to citizenship for recipients. DACA recipients are also known as "DREAMers" or DACA-mented people. The term "DREAMers" references the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The DREAM Act has not passed but would have given legal status to eligible individuals without documentation who arrived in the U.S. as children, including DACA recipients.

Note: As of July 16, 2021, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is only processing DACA renewals. USCIS will accept initial DACA applications but not process those applications. More information is available from [USCIS](https://uscis.gov) and the [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#).



DACA Recipients and Eligibility Criteria

Individuals must meet specific criteria to be eligible for DACA. To be eligible for DACA, someone must have been under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012 (born by June 15, 1981), been living continuously in the U.S. since June 2007, and arrived in the U.S. before their 16th birthday.¹ DACA recipients must also have proof of education, such as a high school degree or GED, and have not been convicted of a crime. DACA status is only granted for two years at a time, so recipients must reapply for the program every two years. Individuals with a current DACA status are considered active DACA recipients. Individuals whose two-year approval period expired, and renewal has not been approved or has been denied, do not have an active DACA status.

As of June 2021, there were approximately 13,000 active DACA recipients in Colorado, 8,500 of whom live in the Denver-metro area. An estimated 590,000 people live in the U.S. with this status and the majority have a family member who is a U.S. citizen².

¹ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, July 19, 2021, <https://www.uscis.gov/DACA>

² U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Count of Active DACA Recipients, June 30, 2021, <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Active%20DACA%20Recipients%20%E2%80%93%20June%2030%2C%202021.pdf>



Health coverage for DACA recipients

DACA recipients are *not* considered qualified immigrants for the purposes of health coverage, even though they have a lawfully present immigration status. This means that DACA recipients are not eligible for federal programs, such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

DACA recipients are eligible for:

- Emergency Medicaid*
- Hospital discounted care*
- Employer-sponsored insurance, if offered
- Off-exchange health plans (plans bought outside of Connect for Health Colorado)

DACA recipients are *not* eligible for:

- Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program)
- Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+)
- Health insurance plans purchased through Connect for Health Colorado, including full-priced plans**
- Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP)

*Eligibility depends on income for [Emergency Medicaid](#) and [hospital discounted care](#).

**In 2023, Coloradans under 300% of the federal poverty level who do not qualify for health coverage through Health First Colorado, CHP+, or Connect for Health Colorado will be eligible for state-based subsidies to help lower the costs of buying individual health coverage. DACA recipients will be eligible for these subsidies.



Frequently Asked Questions

Are DACA recipients subject to public charge?

Yes, according to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, DACA recipients who apply to for an adjustment of status to receive a 'Green Card' may be subject to public charge. However, DACA recipients are generally not eligible to receive the benefits that are included in a public charge test. Currently, the only benefits considered are federally funded Medicaid for long-term institutional care, and cash assistance for income maintenance programs. More information on public charge is available in CKF's [Job Aid: Key Points for Assistants to Help Clients Understand Public Charge](#).

Where can DACA recipients get health care services?

All individuals, regardless of immigration status, can get health care at a Community Health Center or community safety net clinic. Maps are available at the links below:

- Community Health Centers: <https://cchn.org/map/>
- Community safety net clinics: <https://www.cosafetynet.org/> and <https://nafclinics.org/find-clinic/>

Some children and pregnant people who are immigrants are able to get health coverage through Health First Colorado or CHP+. Do those exceptions apply to people with DACA?

No, these exceptions do not apply to DACA recipients. Children and pregnant people with DACA are not eligible for Health First Colorado or CHP+.

How can I help a client find an off-exchange plan?

Health insurance plans can be purchased directly from the insurance company or through an agent or broker, outside of Connect for Health Colorado. You can contact a broker through [Connect for Health Colorado](#).

How can I help mixed-status families where a parent is a DACA recipient, and a child is a U.S. citizen?

In a mixed-status family, eligibility for benefits may be different for each family member, depending on their immigration statuses. In this case, the parent would not be eligible for Health First Colorado or CHP+, while the child may be, depending on the family income. Parents can apply for health coverage for their children even if the parent is not applying for benefits for themselves. Since the parent is not eligible for coverage, they would be a nonapplicant and would not be required to report their immigration status. Parents can choose to submit their Social Security Number to have their information verified electronically.

How can I help mixed-status families where a parent is undocumented, and a child is a DACA recipient?

DACA recipients and people without documentation are not eligible for public health coverage, such as Health First Colorado or CHP+. People without documentation are eligible for the same benefits as DACA recipients, including Emergency Medicaid, hospital discounted care programs, employer-sponsored insurance, and off-exchange health plans. Community Health Centers and other community safety net clinics are available for health care services as well.

If my client doesn't have health insurance, can they still go to a hospital if they have an emergency?

Yes, under Federal law all hospitals are required to provide emergency services regardless of a person's immigration status, nationality, or ability to pay. If your client received emergency care, they may be eligible for Emergency Medicaid to cover the costs of emergency health care services they received in the past three months. More information on Emergency Medicaid is available in CKF's [Job Aid: Emergency Medicaid Overview: Emergency Services for Certain Non-Citizens](#).

Where can I go for additional resources?

- Denver Human Rights & Community Partnerships, [Resources for DACA Recipients](#)
- Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, [DACA/TPS](#)
- Center for Health Progress, [Immigrant Health](#)
- MSU Denver, [DACA/Undocumented/Migrant Community Health Toolkit](#)
- National Immigration Legal Services Directory, [Colorado Organizations](#)