

The questions and answers that follow provide information about student financial aid for undocumented students (sometimes referred to as "Dreamers") as well as guidance for a specific subgroup of undocumented students who have received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

General Information

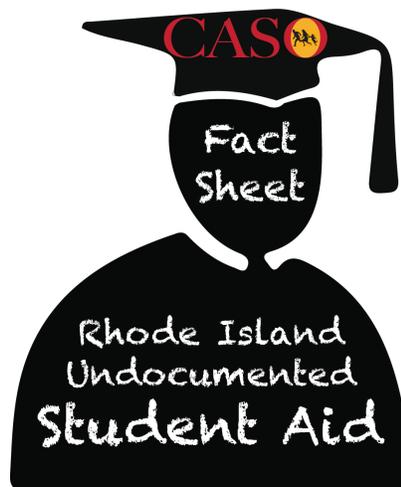
Who are undocumented students?

Undocumented students are students who are not U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or "eligible noncitizens." Undocumented students are sometimes referred to as "Dreamers." This term generally refers to undocumented youths who have lived in the United States from a very young age. The term "Dreamers" is derived from the legislation introduced in Congress and known as the "DREAM Act." You can read more about the proposed "DREAM Act" at www.ed.gov/news/speeches/dream-act-testimony.

Within the larger group of undocumented students, there is a subgroup of students who have received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA.

What is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)?

DACA is the name used of a process announced by the Secretary of Homeland Security on June 15, 2012. Under this process, if you came to the United States as a child and meet several key guidelines, you may contact U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a component of the Department of Homeland Security, to request consideration of deferred action. "Deferred action" refers to a decision to defer (delay or put off) removal action of an individual. DACA may be granted by USCIS for a period of two years and may be



renewed under certain circumstances. Deferred action does not provide an individual with lawful status; however, recipients of deferred action may obtain work authorization.

General information about DACA:
www.uscis.gov/childhoodarrivals

Answers to a series of frequently asked questions related to DACA, filing requirements, evidence, decisions, and renewals:

www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process/frequently-asked-questions

Who is a DACA student?

A DACA student has received deferred action under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals process. Most DACA students are also granted work authorization; and if a student has work authorization, the student may be eligible to obtain a Social Security number. (More information about obtaining a Social Security number is in Question C.1.)

Thus, if a DACA student is granted deferred action and employment authorization, the student may be eligible for a Social Security number. For more information about obtaining a Social Security number, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/deferred_action.pdf.

Eligibility for Financial Aid

As an undocumented student or DACA student, am I eligible for federal student aid?

No. Undocumented students, including DACA students and Dreamers, are not eligible for federal student aid. However, in Rhode Island as of January 2019, you are eligible for state or college financial aid. Most states and colleges use information collected on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the CSS Profile to determine whether you are eligible for aid. *If you are undocumented and have graduated or are graduating from a high school in Rhode Island and plan to attend a state college in Rhode Island, you are eligible for the Rhode Island Student Success initiative.*

As an undocumented student or DACA student in Rhode Island, am I eligible for in-state tuition?

Yes, if you meet the criteria established by the Rhode Island Board of Governors. Visit the CASO website for details: www.casori.org.

Completing the Rhode Island Student Success Application (RISSA)

To complete the RISSA form, do I need a Social Security number?

No. A Social Security number is not necessary to complete the RISSA. Undocumented students without a Social Security number and DACA students with Social Security numbers can complete the RISSA. Still, even if you have a Social Security number and are applying to non-state colleges in or outside of Rhode Island, you should complete the FAFSA so you can be eligible for private aid or out-of-state aid.

Does my parents' citizenship status affect my eligibility for federal student aid?

No. Your parents' citizenship status does not affect your eligibility for state student aid. In fact, the RISSA doesn't even ask about your parents' status.

In order for me to complete the RISSA form, do my parents need Social Security numbers?

No. Since your parents' citizenship does not affect your ability to complete the RISSA, they do not need Social Security numbers. If your parents do not have Social Security numbers, you must enter 000-00- 0000 when the RISSA asks for parents' Social Security numbers. If you are living with a local guardian and are under the age of 18, you must use his or her or their tax information.

If your parents do not have Social Security numbers, one or more parent or local guardian must sign the signature page from the online RISSA.

On the RISSA form, how do I answer the question that reads, "Are you a U.S. citizen?"

Both DACA students those without a Social Security number must answer that question by selecting the option "No, I am not a citizen or eligible noncitizen."

On the RISSA form, how do I answer the question that reads, "What is your state of legal residence?"

If Rhode Island is your legal residence, then it is your true, fixed, and permanent home. The fact that you are a DACA or undocumented student does not affect how you should answer this question for purposes of completing the RISSA.

On the RISSA form, how do I answer the question that reads, “What is your parents’ state of legal residence?”

Your parents’ answer should reflect their true, fixed, and permanent home. Your parents’ legal immigration status does not affect how you should answer this question for purposes of completing the RISSA.

On the RISSA form, how do I submit my tax information?

If you are completing the FAFSA on paper or online at fafsa.gov and you filed your income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), you may use the same information. If you did not file an income tax return with the IRS, follow the instructions on the RISSA form that detail how to answer the parental financial information questions.

On the RISSA form, how do my parents or local guardian submit their tax information?

If you are completing the FAFSA on paper or online at fafsa.gov and your parents or a local guardian filed their income tax returns with the IRS and they meet certain requirements such as having Social Security numbers, you may use the same information. If your parents or a local guardian did not file their income tax returns with the IRS, follow the instructions on the RISSA form that detail how to answer the parental financial information questions.

What documents and information do I need to be eligible for Rhode Island state financial aid?

- A completed and signed Rhode Island Student Success Application (RISSA) form.
- 2017 financial documentation — your federal income tax returns, i.e. a copy of your Form 1040, Form 1099, W-2’s, and other records of earned income. **IMPORTANT:** Do not bring original financial documents — please bring copies!

- Your Social Security Number, if you received your DACA status.
- Your Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U.S. citizen).
- **IMPORTANT:** If you are under 24 years old, a parent or legal guardian must sign the RISSA form.

About CASO

The **Coalition of Advocates for Student Opportunities (CASO)** was founded in 2009 and is managed by volunteers. Our mission is to promote and support a pathway to higher education for undocumented students in the State of Rhode Island.

This FACT SHEET was created by CASO to help undocumented and DACAmented students understand the requirements for the *Rhode Island Students Success (RISSA)* initiative.

RISSA was initiated by the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner in partnership with CASO.

For questions or more details, contact Yaruska Ordinola, CASO Project Assistant at yaruska@casori.org or Marta V. Martínez Chair of CASO at marta@casori.org



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