FACT SHEET: AAPI and Undocumented? Invest In Your Future

About 1.5 million undocumented individuals of Asian descent currently live in the shadows. Many are young people who, because of their immigration status, are unable to realize their full potential.

“They are Americans in their heart, in their minds, in every single way but one: on paper. They were brought to this country by their parents – sometimes even as infants – and often have no idea that they’re undocumented until they apply for a job or a driver’s license, or a college scholarship. Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine you’ve done everything right your entire life – studied hard, worked hard, maybe even graduated at the top of your class – only to suddenly face the threat of deportation to a country that you know nothing about, with a language that you may not even speak.”

–President Barack Obama, June 15, 2012

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

On June 15, 2012, the Obama Administration announced that the Department of Homeland Security would establish Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The 2012 DACA policy allows certain undocumented individuals who came to the United States as children to seek temporary relief from removal as a matter of prosecutorial discretion on a case-by-case basis and, if provided, an opportunity to apply for employment authorization.

Estimates indicate that more than 130,000 undocumented individuals of Asian descent may be able to request consideration of DACA. Most live in large states like California, New York, and Texas, but many also live in states like Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, Indians, and Vietnamese account for the majority of those who may be eligible under the 2012 DACA policy. Additionally, many from the Pacific to East Asia are also potential DACA recipients.

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Impact of DACA
Surveys of DACA recipients have shown that many are finding jobs with better pay, providing the ability to help their families financially; finding jobs that better fit their education and training; and pursuing additional educational opportunities.³ This also helps raise wages and create opportunities for native-born workers in the United States.⁴

"Before DACA, I was just surviving, moving from job to job, paycheck to paycheck. Now, I'm working at one of the largest companies in the world and I'm able to take care of my family. After DACA, my mindset is no longer just about surviving, but now I'm focused on thriving."
— Sagar Patagundi, Louisville, KY (DACA Recipient)

"We see DACAmenced young people as talented, highly motivated individuals that strengthen the American workforce. DACA gives these individuals an opportunity to show what they can do, and as an employer we are excited to see just how far they can go."
— Cathy Cha, San Francisco, CA (Employer)

"Prior to DACA, I was uncertain about my future in this country, but had high hopes of one day becoming a doctor. However, medical school often seemed unattainable, especially when my immigration status made even volunteering in the clinical setting a challenge. Because of DACA, I was able to work in clinical research and I'm now a first year medical student. DACA opened doors for me to attend one of the finest medical schools in the country."
— Marcela Zhou, Los Angeles, CA (DACA Recipient)

How to Request DACA
For more information about DACA, as well as how to file a request for consideration of DACA, visit U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: www.uscis.gov/data.

Visit www.whitehouse.gov/aapi to learn more about the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, which is housed in the U.S. Department of Education.

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