



## *DACA Delays, Denials, Detentions, & Deportations*

DACA recipients are being forced out of status as a result of administrative policies, targeted enforcement, and Congressional inaction.

**MAY 2026**

For nearly 14 years, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy has provided temporary relief from deportation and work authorization for hundreds of thousands of Dreamers—undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children and have grown up here.

Recently, there has been an alarming surge in reports of DACA recipients being [arrested, detained, and deported](#). These unlawful immigration enforcement actions, alongside processing backlogs and new administrative policies that are forcing DACA recipients out of status, cast an uncertain future for hundreds of thousands of immigrants currently protected by this longstanding, successful policy.

### **DACA Recipients Are Being Arrested, Detained, and Deported**

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has arrested, detained, and deported large numbers of DACA recipients since the start of the Trump administration, despite the protections and promise that DACA is supposed to provide.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has [reported](#) that ICE arrested roughly 260 DACA recipients in 2025, and that as many as 174 DACA recipients [had been deported](#). While there are no government data for 2026, numerous stories of individuals with active DACA being detained and deported this year—like [Maria de Jesús Estrada Juárez](#), [Juan Sebastian Chavez Velasco](#), and [José Contreras Díaz](#)—have drawn national attention. Some deported DACA recipients have won legal victories that have [allowed them to return home](#), highlighting the illegality of ICE’s aggressive enforcement actions.

The Trump administration is taking deliberate steps to weaken DACA’s protections and force DACA recipients out of the United States. DHS officials have [continually warned](#) that DACA recipients should be fearful of arrest and removal, and have [urged them](#) to “self-deport.” In April 2026, the Board of Immigration Appeals, a [politically appointed](#) panel of judges that hears appeal cases and interprets immigration law, sided with DHS lawyers in a precedent-setting decision that makes it [easier to deport DACA recipients](#).

## DACA Renewal Delays

Many DACA recipients across the U.S. are being forced out of their jobs and exposed to the threat of deportation because of increasing processing delays and denials, despite their having filed timely renewal applications and having paid hundreds of dollars in fees.

USCIS is taking months longer to process DACA renewal applications, and in some cases, is not even processing them at all. While median processing times for DACA renewals have been [a month or less](#) in recent years, USCIS reports current median processing times of [at least four months](#), while [DACA recipients](#) and [attorneys](#) across the U.S. are reporting wait times of [six months or more](#).

If an individual’s DACA (which is only valid for two years at a time) expires before their renewal is processed, their employment authorization also expires, and they can no longer work; DACA recipients in certain states will also lose their driver’s licenses. If their DACA lapses, they also no longer have the protection from deportation that DACA should provide, putting them at greater risk of arrest, detention, and deportation. Furthermore, any time spent in the U.S. until the renewal is processed will be [counted as “unlawful presence,”](#) which could [prevent them](#) from accessing a legal immigration pathway in the future.

Some factors contributing to delays include [stricter review and vetting procedures](#) at USCIS, including re-submitting all fingerprint-based screenings (like DACA biometrics) for [enhanced FBI checks](#). Additionally, USCIS is [not processing](#) any applications for individuals from any of the 39 countries named in the president’s latest [Travel Ban](#), even though most DACA recipients have spent the majority of their lives living in the U.S. These increasing delays track with [surging USCIS backlogs and processing times](#) across all immigration categories in the second Trump administration.

Leaders in Congress have [sent multiple letters](#) to USCIS and DHS leadership demanding explanations and solutions for delays in DACA processing, but to no avail. Reported wait times only continue to increase, and more DACA recipients are targeted by immigration enforcement.

## Upcoming Changes to DACA Work Authorization, in Texas and Beyond

A federal judge in Texas is expected to issue a court order soon that would [invalidate work permits for DACA recipients in Texas](#), which could pave the way for future attacks on DACA.

Congress's decades-long failure to pass legislation to protect Dreamers has left DACA vulnerable to persistent [legal challenges](#). In September 2023, a federal judge in Texas issued a ruling declaring the policy illegal. While an appeals court upheld the decision, that court limited the impact to the state of Texas and allowed DACA recipients to keep their deportation protections, but not their work permits. The appeals court sent the case back to the district court judge to determine how to implement the decision.

As of right now, nothing has changed for DACA recipients in Texas or elsewhere; active DACA protections and work authorizations are still valid.

When the judge's order is issued, it should describe when and how DACA work permits will be invalidated in Texas. They could be voided immediately, the court could provide a "sunset" period where permits remain valid for a set period of time, or the court could prevent recipients from renewing after a certain point. Whatever the details, it is clear that, sometime in the near future, DACA recipients in Texas will not be allowed to work.

Legal experts anticipate that other states may attempt to be included under the order or launch similar legal challenges, citing this case as precedent.

## What Lies Ahead for Dreamers in America

DACA recipients, even those who manage to maintain their protections, face increasing challenges and limitations in their daily lives in the U.S. Much of the progress of the last decade to expand opportunities for Dreamers is being rolled back under the second Trump administration.

For example, the Trump administration has [imposed a ban](#) on DACA recipients accessing health care under the Affordable Care Act, has [targeted universities](#) that offer grants for students with DACA, and has [sued nine states](#) to prevent DACA recipients and other undocumented students from being recognized as residents to qualify for in-state college tuition rates.

DHS has not been processing initial applications for DACA for five years, citing an earlier court order in the Texas case (though many legal experts believe the appeals court's decision allows USCIS to resume processing). Additionally, DACA is only available for individuals who have been present in the U.S. since at least 2007, even if applications were being processed, excluding younger Dreamers who arrived more recently.

As a result, well [more than 1.5 million Dreamers](#) do not have access to DACA. Despite being in the same situation and having similar backgrounds to youth who were originally able to qualify for DACA, this new generation of Dreamers is growing up without protections and will not be able to work when they come of age.

While President Trump has made [vague statements of support](#) and assurances that Dreamers should not “worry,” his administration has done nothing to protect Dreamers and is actively forcing them out of the workforce and trying to deport them.

## Conclusion

Despite DACA's tremendous success, Dreamers are at a greater risk than ever as the policy continues to be restricted and weakened. While it is critical for those still protected by it, too many Dreamers cannot access DACA, and the future for current recipients is increasingly unclear. Now, more than ever, Americans need to stand with Dreamers and demand a better, more permanent solution.

To start, the Trump administration must stop its attacks on the DACA policy and DACA recipients, including stopping ICE from targeting and deporting Dreamers, addressing the delays and backlogs in DACA renewals, and resuming processing of initial DACA applications.

Ultimately, Congress needs to pass legislation that will allow DACA recipients and other Dreamers to adjust to legal status and pursue a pathway to citizenship. Straightforward legislation like the Dream Act ([S. 3348](#)) and the American Dream and Promise Act ([H.R. 1589](#)) have been introduced in every Congress for many years and have enjoyed strong bipartisan support.