

# California Dream Act Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Parents and Students



**The California Dream Act allows undocumented and nonresident documented students who meet certain provisions to apply for and receive private scholarships funded through public universities, state-administered financial aid, university grants, community college fee waivers, and Cal Grants.**

## **Q. What is Assembly Bill (AB) 540 and how do I obtain AB 540 status?**

**A.** AB 540 allows non-resident students who meet certain qualifications to pay in-state tuition. These students may include undocumented students, students who are US citizens but who are not CA residents, and dependent students whose parents are not CA residents. AB 540 students are those who:

- Have attended a CA high school for a minimum of three years; or
- Attainment of credits in California from a California high school equivalent of at least three or more years of full-time high school coursework and a total of three or more years of attendance in California Elementary schools, California secondary schools, or a combination of those schools.
- Graduated or will graduate from a California high school or attainment of General Education Development (GED), High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), or Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC), and
- Will register or enroll in an accredited and qualifying California college or university, and
- If applicable, complete an affidavit to legalize immigration status as soon as eligible, and
- Do not hold a valid non-immigrant visa (F, J, H, L, A, B, C, D, E, etc.)\*\*

\*\*If you have Temporary Protected Status or hold a U Visa you may be eligible for the California Dream Act.

To confirm your AB 540 eligibility, you will be required to fill out an [affidavit](#) and provide supporting documentation to the campus Residency Deputy, Admissions Office, or Registrar of the college or university you will be attending. You should seek to complete this process in the spring or summer before you begin attending (or in fall for those who will be starting school in the spring).

## **Q. How do I apply for financial aid under the California Dream Act?**

**A.** The CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) is used by undocumented students who meet the eligibility requirements of AB 540. The application can be found at [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org). The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) processes the application and any aid received can only be used at eligible California public or private institutions.

**U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens such as permanent residents** should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). They may be eligible for federal student aid as well as California student aid.

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The [Cal Grant application](#) deadline for students using the CADAA or the FAFSA is March 2 prior to the academic year. For Cal Grants offered under the California Dream Act, you must also submit a certified GPA to CSAC.

### **Q: Are “temporary” nonimmigrant visa holders eligible to complete the CADAA?**

**A:** No, students who hold a temporary nonimmigrant Visa are ineligible to submit an application. The exception is the “U” Visa.

### **Q: What is a “U” Visa?**

**A:** The “U” Visa provides eligible crime victims with legal status to temporarily remain in the U.S. while assisting law enforcement. AB 1899 allows “U” Visa holders to be considered for state financial aid programs and are not required to complete the AB 540 Affidavit.

### **Q: When is the CADAA be available?**

**A:** The online and paper application will be available October 1. For faster processing time, CSAC recommends using the online application process.

### **Q. Where can I get help with completing my CADAA?**

**A.** You can visit your FAO or School Counselor/Advisor, or you can attend a [Cash for College](#) workshop.

### **Q. Can I fill out the CA Dream Act Application if I don’t have a Social Security number?**

**A.** Yes, students who meet the AB 540 eligibility requirements are not required to have a Social Security number in order to submit the application. If you have a Social Security number issued by [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#) for work purposes only, that number should be entered on question #8 of the application. Question #8 should be left blank for applicants without Social Security numbers.

DACA is a federal program that defers removal action by United States Citizenship Immigration Services for two years and is renewable. DACA students may be eligible to apply for a social security card that is valid for work purposes. The social security card will state that it is, “Valid for work only with DHS authorization.”

The U.S. Department of Education is encouraging students with DACA Social Security numbers to complete the FAFSA. We advise California students (attending college in CA) to complete the CADAA. Undocumented AB 540 students should complete the CADAA instead of the FAFSA. In the event that you already submitted a FAFSA before learning that you should submit a CADAA, complete the CADAA, then

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complete the [Application Conversion Form](#). You can submit the form to CSAC. You can also contact CSAC at 1-888-294-7268 for more information.

### **Q. As an undocumented student, am I eligible for *federal* student aid?**

**A.** No, undocumented students are not eligible for federal student aid. If you attend an eligible California public or private institution, you will be considered for CA state financial aid—like Cal Grants, Chafee Foster Youth Grant, Middle Class Scholarship—and institutional aid—like [University Grants](#), [State University Grants](#), California Community College [Board of Governors \(BOG\) Fee Waivers](#), and private scholarships administered through institutions. Eligible students attending the University of California and the California State University may be eligible for the Dream Loan. Your school will determine your financial aid eligibility. We encourage you to submit the CADAA by March 2, because it is the deadline to receive consideration for most types of aid available to you.

### **Q. Do I have to wait until my parents or I file taxes to complete my CADAA?**

**A.** No, do not miss any important deadlines! The CADAA uses [prior-prior-year tax](#) information. If you or your parents did not earn enough in the prior year to file taxes, simply select “Will not file” on the tax filing question in the application.

### **Q. What if my parents live in another county, and I live with my aunt/boyfriend/sibling/roommate?**

**A.** If you are 24 years or younger, and don’t meet any of the independent criteria, even if you do not live with your legal parents (your biological and or adoptive parents), you must provide your parent’s information, and one parent must sign your application. You cannot report your aunt, grandparent, sibling, boyfriend/girlfriend, legal guardian, or friend’s information in place of parent information unless they have legally adopted you.

If you are unable to get your parent information, complete the application as much as you can and contact your college’s financial aid office (FAO) as soon as possible. The FAO will evaluate your condition and inform you if they can override the need for parent information. CSAC does not have the authority to override dependency or financial information.

### **Q. Does my parent’s citizenship affect my eligibility for Dream Act financial aid?**

**A.** No, your parents’ citizenship status does not impact your eligibility to receive Dream Act financial aid.

### **Q. How does my parent sign my application?**

**A.** After completing your online application, navigate to the link that says “Sign Student Application.” Your parent must select “Request Parent PIN” and answer the verification questions. Then your parent will be

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issued a 4-digit electronic PIN code to sign your application. Keep this code in a safe place—*your parent will need it to re-sign each time you make a correction to your application.*

### **Q. How do I fix mistakes on my CADAA?**

**A.** After initial successful submission of your application, CSAC will send you an email with your nine-digit Dream ID number. If you haven't received an email from us, be sure to check your spam/junk folders. Keep this number in a safe place- you will use your Dream ID number to create a WebGrants for Students account, when you talk to your college, or CSAC. Review the Confirmation Page within your application to view the errors that need correction.

### **Q. I applied for financial aid using the CADAA. What's next? Do I automatically get financial aid?**

**A.** Great, you successfully completed your CADAA! Next, CSAC will send your application data to all of the colleges listed on your application. After allowing for processing time, 8-10 business days, you may follow up with those colleges to determine whether you are eligible for campus aid. To apply for a Cal Grant, you must also submit your GPA to CSAC by the March 2 deadline.

Qualifying for a Cal Grant is not automatic as it is a need-based program. You must meet financial eligibility and GPA requirements. After receiving your CADAA and GPA, CSAC will process your application to determine if you are eligible to receive a Cal Grant. After completion of your CADAA, we encourage you to open a WebGrants for Students account at [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org) in order to check the status of your Cal Grant eligibility. Additional information on how to apply for a Cal Grant can be found [here](#).

### **Q. How do I submit my GPA for a Cal Grant if I don't have a Social Security number?**

**A.** You may submit a Non-SSN GPA; this is a school certified GPA that uses information other than an SSN to match the GPA to your application. Ask your school to submit a Non-SSN GPA electronically for you. Otherwise, you may download the paper [Cal Grant Non-SSN GPA Verification Form](#). You will fill out the top portion and your school must verify your GPA and sign the bottom of the form. The form must be mailed to the CSAC on or before March 2.

### **Q. I was notified that I was awarded a Cal Grant! How do I receive the money?**

**A.** You must set up a Web Grants for Students account to manage your Cal Grant. This account allows you to make school changes or address changes, and to find out if there are additional actions that must be taken before your school can disburse your first payment. Visit [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org) to create an account. If you are not attending the college that is listed, submit a school change through [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org).

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If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 25, you are required to register with the Selective Service System (SSS) before receiving state financial aid. The SSS does not share your immigration status. The CADAA will ask if you want CSAC to register you through a secure electronic data exchange with the SSS. You can also [register online](#) with the SSS. Visit their website for more information: [www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov).

Your college's FAO is in charge of disbursing all Cal Grant payments. Check your financial aid portal, FAO, or financial aid website to see a schedule of their Cal Grant disbursement dates. If that date has come and gone without you receiving a disbursement, check with your FAO immediately to see if your financial aid file is incomplete.

### **Q. How do I renew my Cal Grant?**

**A.** If you received the Cal Grant, you must re-submit your CADAA every year to renew your award. You will use the same login information (User ID/Password) from the previous year to enter your CADAA. To re-submit your application, go to [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org) and choose the "Login to Application" option. You will need to provide your login information and select the appropriate academic year application.

Cal Grant renewals will receive their award information in late spring, so you should re-submit your application before then.

If you did not receive the Cal Grant, you can reapply the next year by re-submitting your CADAA and a new GPA before the March 2 deadline following the same procedure outlined in the paragraph above. If you have never submitted a CADAA, go to [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org), choosing the "Start Dream Application" option.

### **Q. I am a foster youth, and I don't have a Social Security number or any paperwork about my biological parents. Can I get any financial aid for college?**

**A.** Eligible students may qualify for other types of aid such as:

- [Chafee Grant](#)
- Cal Grants
- Scholarships offered through California public colleges and universities
- Board of Governors (BOG) fee waivers and California Community colleges
- Private grants and scholarships

### **Q: What is the Dream loan?**

**A:** SB 1210 establishes the California DREAM Loan Program for purposes of extending loans to students who meet the requirements established by AB 540 that have financial need. The DREAM Loan authorizes any campus of the University of California or the California State University to participate. Eligible students can contact their school for more information.

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**Q: How will the college know if I am interested in a Dream loan?**

**A:** Question 31 on the CADAA asks, “Are you interested in student loans?” Select, “Yes” if you are interested in the Dream Loan.

Talk to your institution’s financial aid office for more information.

*Learn more about the California Dream Act*

[www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org)