



California Dream Act Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for College Financial Aid Administrators

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 does a student 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 at least three years, OR
- Have attained credits earned 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, AND
- 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 Enrolled in an accredited and qualifying CA college or university, 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 AB 540 eligibility, students 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 that the student will be attending. The student should seek to complete this process in the spring or summer before he or she begins attending (or in fall for those who will be starting school in the spring).

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Q. How does a student 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. 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. They may be eligible for federal student aid as well as California student aid.

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: Can “temporary” nonimmigrant visa holders complete the application?

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. Can a student fill out the CADAA if he or she doesn’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 an applicant has 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.

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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 a student has already submitted a FAFSA before learning that he or she should submit a CADAA, complete the CADAA, then complete the [Application Conversion Form](#). You can submit the form to CSAC. You can also contact CSAC at 1-888-294-0153 for more information.

Q. Are undocumented students eligible for *federal* student aid?

A. No, undocumented students are not eligible for federal student aid. If a student attends an eligible California public or private institution, the student 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. The school will determine financial aid eligibility. Encourage your students to submit the CADAA by March 2, because it is the deadline to receive consideration for most types of aid.

Q: Why and how do CA Dream Act applicants register for the Selective Service?

A: Males between the ages of 18 and 25 are required to register with the Selective Service System (SSS) before receiving state financial aid. The SSS does not share immigration statuses. The CADAA has an option for males to register you through a secure electronic data exchange with the SSS using the CADAA. Students can also [register online](#) with the SSS. Visit their website for more information: www.sss.gov.

Q: When and how will my institution receive the application data?

A: Students must list their schools of choice on the application. Schools will receive the CAL ISIR approximately 7 – 10 days AFTER the application is submitted. The CAL ISIR can be found in WebGrants, Data Transfer, Report Download, and CA Dream Act ISIRs.

Q: How can I find an applicant in WebGrants?

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A: From the Portal menu, choose “CA Dream Act,” select “Dream Act ISIR Search,” enter at least two fields or enter the Dream ID, and choose “search.” If you do not see the student, most likely the student did not list your institution on the application.

Q: What is the purpose of the timer?

A: The 30-minute timer is a security feature that protects the confidentiality of the application in the event the student is working on a shared or public computer. Each time a student selects the “Save Application” icon, he or she will be given an additional 30 minutes to save the application.

Q: What happens if the timer runs out?

A: When the timer gets down to the two minute mark, a pop-up will appear reminding students to save the application for an additional 30-minutes. If students do not select the “Save Application” button, the timer will run out and information not saved will be lost. Additionally, the student will automatically be logged out of the application.

Q: Can institutions make changes/corrections to an application?

A: Yes. Institutions can make changes/corrections to an application with the exception of the name and date of birth. From the Portal menu, choose “CA Dream Act,” select “Dream Act ISIR Search,” and conduct a search to find the student. Select the “Correct” link to the right, make changes, and submit. CSAC is the only authorized agency to make name and date of birth changes. To submit a name and date of birth change, please submit the [Name/Date of Birth Change Request Form \(G-19\)](#).

Q: When will my institution receive the “corrected” application data?

A: Your institution will receive the corrected CAL ISIR in approximately 7 – 10 days AFTER the correction has been made. The corrected ISIR can be found in WebGrants, Data Transfer, Report Download, and CA Dream Act ISIRs.

Q: Where can I find an applicant’s Confirmation Page?

A: From the Portal menu, choose “CA Dream Act,” select “Dream Act ISIR Search,” and enter at least two fields or enter the Dream ID, and choose “search.” Identify the student, select the “Confirmation View” link to the right.

Q: Where can I find an applicant’s California Student Aid Report (Cal SAR)?

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A: From the Portal menu, choose “CA Dream Act,” select “Dream Act ISIR Search,” and enter at least two fields or enter the Dream ID. Choose “search,” identify the student, select the “Cal SAR Report” link to the right.

Q: What is involved in the verification process for Dream Act students?

A: It is the institution’s responsibility to ensure ALL Dream Act students meet the AB 540 eligibility requirements. Approximately 20% of Dream applications are randomly selected for verification. Verify using the same process as the federal verification (V1) process.

Q: Must schools verify selective service registration for all males or just the 20% selected for verification?

A: As outlined in the Institutional Participation Agreement, prior to the disbursement of Cal Grant funds, institutions must verify student eligibility including males between the ages of 18-25 are registered for Selective Service.

Q: Why does the application ask for the parental or student [Individual Taxpayer Identification Number \(ITIN\)](#)?

A: ITINs are issued by the IRS and are used for federal tax reporting only. Some parents and independent students use ITINs to file taxes. CSAC will not share this information with other agencies or organizations. Colleges will use this information to verify student financial aid eligibility.

Q: Does a parent need a valid SSN to electronically sign the application?

A: No. A valid SSN is not required to obtain a parent PIN.

Q: Will the parent need a new PIN for each student?

A: Yes, the parent must obtain a new PIN for each student, and use that pin each year to renew the application.

Q: Do students sign using a PIN?

A: No. Students will not sign the application using a PIN.

Q. For unmarried parents living together, should the student report the income for both parents?

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A: Yes. Dependent students are required to include the income of both parents.

Q: Does the application have a section for unmarried parents not living together?

A: Yes. Students should answer the questions about the parent they live with the most during the 12 months preceding the application date. If they do not live with one parent more than the other, give answers about the parent who provides the most financial support.

Q: If parents or independent students are paid wages in the form of cash, are they required to list it on the application?

A: Yes. If parents or students do not file a tax return, cash earnings must be reported on the application.

Q: Can students submit an application before filing a tax return?

A: No. The CADAA uses [prior-prior-year tax](#) information. If the student or 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.

Each time a dependent student makes a change to the application, the parent must sign the application using the parent PIN. If the parent does not re-sign the application, it will be placed in a “hold/unprocessed” status.

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.

Q: How will my institution know if the student is interested in a Dream loan?

A: Question 31 on the CADAA asks the student, “Are you interested in student loans?” The student selects, “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know.”

Q: Are CA Dream Act students eligible for Cal Grant award consideration?

A: Yes. CA Dream Act students can qualify for an Entitlement Cal Grant A or B and a Cal Grant C. They must submit an application and a non-SSN GPA to CSAC by the March 2 deadline.

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If a student received the Cal Grant, the student must re-submit his or her CADAA every year to renew the award. The student will use the same login information (User ID/Password) from the previous year. Cal Grant renewals will receive their award information in late spring, so students should re-submit the application before then.

If a student did not receive the Cal Grant, he or she can reapply the next year by re-submitting a CADAA and a new GPA before the March 2 deadline. Students will be considered for renewal as long as a new application is submitted each year before the deadline, the income and asset requirements are met, and the student is maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress.