

# HOW TO SUPPORT COLLEGE-BOUND UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

ADVICE FOR COUNSELORS & EDUCATORS



# FACTS ABOUT UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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- » Undocumented students are foreign nationals who came to the US without legal documentation or overstayed their visas.
- » 2.5 million undocumented youth live in the US; 40% of them live in California.
- » About 65,000 undocumented students graduate from US high schools each year. Only 5-10% of these graduates go to college. *We can increase that number!*
- » Many students don't know they're undocumented until they begin the college process.
- » Undocumented students don't qualify for state or federal grants or loans, even if their parents pay taxes. They also cannot legally work to pay for school.
- » Undocumented students may be eligible for in-state tuition under Assembly Bill 540 at CA public universities and colleges.

# WHY YOU SHOULD HELP UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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- » We want the best and brightest students to attend our colleges and contribute meaningfully to this country.
- » These students are an important part of our nation's future.
- » Undocumented students who are college-ready have proven they can succeed.
- » They are not asking to be given anything; they just want to be fairly considered.
- » They affirm our belief in the value of hard work.
- » They are powerful role models.
- » Under federal law, all students – regardless of citizenship or residency – are entitled to a K-12 education, including college counseling services.
- » We've already invested in these students' educations.
- » When the DREAM Act passes, these students will have a path towards legal residency.



# TOP 10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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- » Tell undocumented students that they *can* go to college, but some options and services will not be available to them.
- » Don't ask students to self-identify. Make information and resources available to all students.
- » Be open-minded. Don't make assumptions about which students are undocumented; they aren't all Latino, Spanish-speaking or enrolled in ELD classes.
- » Be knowledgeable about specific policies that affect undocumented students.
- » Support the federal DREAM Act and CA legislation to support undocumented students.
- » Identify scholarships that don't require citizenship or permanent residency. Encourage other scholarships to change their policies.
- » Identify sponsors who can support undocumented students.
- » Help students get ongoing mentoring and advice, even after the college admissions process.
- » Identify older students to serve as role models.
- » Refer students to qualified legal counsel to investigate possible immigration remedies. This can be a lengthy process, and not all students will have immediate remedies.



# CAN UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR IN-STATE TUITION?

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Yes, California law – AB540 – allows certain undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at California public universities and colleges.

Eligibility requirements:

- » Student must have attended high school in California for three or more years;
- » Student must have graduated from a California high school or obtained a GED;
- » Student must file an affidavit declaring the intention to legalize. This must be filed at each school at which they are enrolled.

Important things to know:

- » Recently arrived students should stay in high school for at least three years in order to meet AB540 requirements.
- » Immigrant students with legal status (i.e. visa holders) are not eligible to qualify for AB540.

# APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

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- » Scholarships are the primary way for undocumented students to pay for college. Helping students identify scholarships they are eligible for and writing a strong personal essay is vital to their success in college.
- » Encourage students to put A LOT of time and energy into scholarship applications.
- » Make sure students research and apply to scholarships EARLY – ideally starting in the spring of junior year.
- » Find as many scholarships as possible (especially local ones) that do not require citizenship.
- » Strongly encourage students to apply to every single scholarship they can.
- » Make sure students are very explicit in talking about their story and financial need.

# LOOKING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

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## Individual Scholarships

- » Go to [www.e4fc.org](http://www.e4fc.org) to review a large number of scholarships that don't require proof of citizenship or permanent residency status.

## Private School Scholarships

- » Private universities are expensive but can often provide additional support through institutional grants and scholarships. Check with each school individually to see if 1) undocumented students are eligible to apply for institutional scholarships; 2) a paper FAFSA or CSS Profile should be submitted to determine financial need.



# WHAT UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS MUST KNOW

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- » You are not alone. Thousands of undocumented students have gone to college in the US and graduated. This won't be easy, but you can do it.
- » Get comfortable asking for help. Find people you can trust to help you navigate the college process.
- » Not all college options and services will be available to you, but many are. Be creative. Be entrepreneurial.
- » You are not eligible for federal or state-based financial aid, but you can apply to many private scholarships. Research and apply early to as many scholarships as possible. Community service and internships greatly increase your chance of winning scholarships.
- » Practice telling “your story” as many private scholarships require a face-to-face interview.
- » Certain undocumented students are eligible to pay in-state tuition at California public universities and colleges. Find out if you are eligible for AB540.

- » Private colleges will typically consider you as an international student. If you are required to submit a FAFSA, you can fill it out on paper and mail it directly to schools.
- » If you have significant unmet financial need, you should consider going to a community college first and then transferring to a four-year to save money. Many bright, talented, and ambitious students choose this economical option!
- » Even if you intend to go to a UC or private school, you should apply to your local CSU and community college as a backup plan.
- » Most California colleges and universities have support groups for undocumented students. Get in touch with them to make your transition smoother.

# PRIVACY & LEGAL CONCERNS

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- » Students should not worry about revealing their immigration status when filling out admissions or financial aid applications because the Federal Education and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student records at all educational institutions.
- » Students should not lie about their immigration status during the college admissions process because admission decisions could be revoked.
- » When applying to California public universities and colleges, the following information is requested but not required: social security number, country of citizenship, country of permanent residence, immigration status, and state of legal residence of parent/legal guardian. Applications will be processed without this information.
- » Every student should obtain a school ID number from the colleges where they apply to avoid being asked for his/her social security number during admissions and enrollment.

# RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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- » Visit E4FC online for extensive information about college-bound undocumented students. Find out about AB540 policies for in-state tuition, school-specific admissions policies, available scholarships, and possible immigration remedies. We'll also connect you to groups and organizations that actively support undocumented students.

Visit us today! [www.E4FC.org](http://www.E4FC.org)

# ABOUT EDUCATORS FOR FAIR CONSIDERATION (E4FC)

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E4FC helps immigrant students realize the American dream of college and citizenship. We support immigrant students who have grown up in the United States but face challenges due to financial need and immigration status. Our programs and services address the financial, legal, socio-emotional, and political needs of low-income immigrant students who do not yet have permanent residency or citizenship in the United States.

**[www.E4FC.org](http://www.E4FC.org)**

## UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS CAN GO TO COLLEGE

