

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project - Community Advisory – 07/16/2021 Advisory Regarding Status of DACA Program

Basics: On July 16, 2021, a federal district court in Texas issued a ruling on a case (*Texas v. U.S.*) brought by Texas and a number of other states challenging the validity of the DACA program. The district court ruled that the DACA program is unlawful. The **important message** from today's ruling is that **if you have current DACA status, your DACA status remains valid**, and you can continue to work and to renew your status while anticipated legal processes play out. Please read below for additional information, and continue to check our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for updates as we process the court's decision.

General Background on DACA: President Obama established the DACA program in 2012, which granted a form of temporary protection from deportation known as "deferred action" to undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. before the age of 16, resided in the U.S. since June 2007 and met other requirements. On September 5, 2017, the Trump Administration [announced](#) that it would be ending the program effective March 5, 2018. A number of court challenges were filed that blocked the Administration from terminating the program. Those cases were ultimately appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled against the Trump Administration in June 2020. That ruling did not conclusively resolve all of the legal questions around the DACA program. On December 4, 2020 in a separate case, *Batalla Vidal v. Wolf*, a federal judge in New York ordered the Trump Administration to restore the DACA program. The *Texas v. U.S.* case, filed in 2018 seeking a ruling that the original 2012 DACA memo was unlawful, remained undecided. That decision was issued today, and its impact is explained below.

What does the Texas federal court's decision mean?

Current DACA Recipients: Although the court ruled that the DACA program is unlawful, the court put part of its decision on hold, which means that people who already have DACA will not be immediately impacted by this decision. In other words, current DACA recipients will keep their work permits and can continue to renew them while anticipated legal processes play out.

Initial DACA Applicants: The biggest impact of today's decision is for people who have not already been approved for DACA. The court's decision prohibits DHS from approving any new DACA applications, that is, for anyone applying for DACA for the first time. This means that if you have submitted an initial DACA application or wish to submit an initial DACA application, DHS will accept your application but will not be able to make a decision on your application. Additional court actions are expected based on today's decision.

I am a current DACA recipient or have had it in the past, what should I do now?

If you are a current DACA recipient and your status is not set to expire within the next six months, you do not have to do anything now.

If you are a current DACA recipient and your DACA status is set to expire in six months or less, or has already expired, we recommend that you consider filing a renewal of your DACA status, while keeping in mind the following:

- USCIS will review renewal requests submitted up to 150 days prior to the expiration date of your current work permit. With the long delays in issuing decisions, we encourage you to submit your renewal no later than five months before your expiration date.
- We always recommend that you consult with an immigration attorney or accredited representative before submitting an immigration application, but especially if you have had any contact with the police or immigration officials, or have left the United States since your last DACA application was approved.
- The decision today leaves unclear how Renewals as Initials (for individuals whose DACA status expired more than a year ago) will be handled. Our current position is that they should still be accepted. Please check back for further information on this as we learn more about today's decision.

We also recommend that DACA recipients who have not already done so recently consult with an immigration attorney or accredited representative to explore whether they might qualify for an immigration status that has a path to citizenship. It is particularly important DACA recipients do this if they:

- Are married to a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident;
- Have been the victim of a crime such as domestic violence, sexual assault or others in the U.S.; or
- Are under 21 years of age.

I never applied for DACA but think I qualify, what should I do? This court decision means that DHS will not issue decisions on applications from individuals applying for DACA for the first time. If you have never been granted DACA status - but you believe you meet [the criteria](#) for the program, our current advice is that you consult with an immigration attorney or accredited representative to understand if you do qualify and to discuss the risks and benefits of doing so. You should understand that, at this time, there is still a risk that further legal actions will mean that if DHS is allowed to make decisions on initial applications, they may be rejected. If you decide to proceed with an initial application, you may end up losing your application fee and face other risks.

I have DACA and am currently working, should I tell my employer about my status? You are not required to tell your employer that you have DACA status or when your work permit expires. It is your employer's responsibility to re-verify your work authorization status. Your employer should not take adverse action against you as long as your work permit remains valid. But keep in mind that the fact that you have a valid social security number will not mean that you will have permission to work if your work authorization has expired.

I am in removal (deportation) proceedings, what should I do? If you are represented by an attorney, you should contact your attorney. If you do not have an attorney, you should consult an immigration attorney or accredited representative as soon as possible. If you cannot afford an attorney, you can contact NWIRP's offices at the numbers listed below. If you're in removal proceedings and meet the eligibility criteria, we recommend you consider applying for DACA.

I am a current DACA recipient and am considering traveling outside the U.S. under advance parole, what should I do? Today's ruling did not directly address advance parole. We believe that this means that DACA recipients can still request advance parole. We urge DACA recipients who are considering international travel to first speak with an attorney or accredited representative. During the current public health crisis, we generally do not recommend any international travel as travel restrictions are constantly changing and there is a risk that you may not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. even with an advance parole document. Importantly, keep in mind that if you leave the U.S. without advance parole, you may not be able to return to the U.S. and you will most likely not be eligible to renew your DACA status.

Do the recent court decisions mean that we no longer need the Dream Act? We absolutely still need Congress to enact a clean version of the DREAM Act. The DACA program is only a temporary status. We need Congress to pass legislation that will allow DACA recipients and others to have a pathway to citizenship.

If you cannot afford to have a consultation with a private immigration attorney, please visit www.nwirp.org/daca for resources. NWIRP also offers free monthly DACA clinics to assist individuals seeking to renew their DACA status. Please visit our website for information.



NWIRP offices: Seattle – (206) 587-4009
Tacoma (for those detained at the NWDC Only) – (253) 383-0519
Tacoma (for non-detained) – (206) 816-3893
Yakima Valley (Granger) – (888) 756-3641
Wenatchee – (866) 271-2084

www.nwirp.org

For a searchable database of private attorneys, please visit www.aialaywer.org