



WELCOMING EVERY STUDENT:

A POSTSECONDARY GUIDE FOR
SERVING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

AUGUST 2025





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INTRODUCTION

Washington is a pro-immigrant state that understands our immigrant communities are vital to our shared future. For decades, Washington has invested in immigrant and undocumented students, recognizing that expanding educational access strengthens our families, communities, and workforce.

Yet today, undocumented immigrants are under renewed attack across the country. In the face of these challenges, Washington must double down on its commitment to ensure that all students—regardless of immigration status—can access higher education and pursue meaningful careers. Doing so is not just a moral imperative; it is critical to achieving our state’s goal of 70% postsecondary attainment, ensuring that Washington’s workforce is prepared to meet the demands of a changing economy.

As the Washington Roundtable emphasizes, Washington will need 70% of its residents to complete a postsecondary credential to sustain a strong economy and fill jobs in high-demand fields.¹ Our undocumented students are part of this future workforce. By investing in their education, we invest in a thriving state economy, resilient local communities, and a more equitable future for all.

This guide was created to support undocumented students in Washington by providing clear, accessible information on how to navigate higher education, access financial aid, and build pathways toward fulfilling careers. It is a resource for educators and community organizations working together to keep Washington a place of opportunity, regardless of immigration status.

1. Washington Roundtable, Skill Up for Our Future: Washington State Job Growth to Surge in High-Demand Industries (Oct. 2024), www.waroundtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SUWA_Report.pdf



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, approximately 2,000 undocumented students graduate from Washington high schools, joining more than 10,000 undocumented students pursuing higher education across our state.² These students are essential to Washington's future. As our state works toward a goal of ensuring that 70% of Washington residents complete a postsecondary credential, undocumented students represent a critical part of the talent pipeline needed to build a thriving, equitable economy.

Washington has taken important steps to open pathways for undocumented students, including access to in-state tuition, state financial aid through the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), professional licensing regardless of immigration status, and expanded basic needs supports on college campuses. Yet many students and families remain unaware of these opportunities or face barriers navigating complex systems, preventing them from completing their education and contributing fully to Washington's workforce.

This guide consolidates essential information for undocumented students and their families, covering:

- **College Access:** Admission policies for undocumented students in community and technical colleges, as well as public and private universities in Washington
- **Financial Aid:** Guidance on WASFA, scholarships, and state-based financial resources
- **Legal Context:** Overview of key policies supporting undocumented students' right to education in Washington
- **Career and Professional Pathways:** Information on professional licensing, entrepreneurship options, and navigating careers as an undocumented student
- **Campus and Community Resources:** Supports for food security, housing, child care, mental health, and undocumented student support networks

2. Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education & Immigration, Washington State Profile, Higher Ed Immigration Portal, www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/washington/

By ensuring undocumented students can pursue education and careers, Washington strengthens its local communities, addresses workforce shortages in high-demand sectors, and upholds its values as a state that believes in opportunity for all. This guide is a tool for educators and advocates to ensure that every undocumented student in Washington can navigate their educational journey and build a secure future here.³

I. UNDERSTANDING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Washington's commitment to educational opportunity includes all students, regardless of their immigration status.⁴ To better support undocumented students in our schools and communities, it is essential to understand who they are, the policies that impact them, and the challenges they face. This section explains what it means to be an undocumented student, outlines the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and clarifies the experiences of non-DACA undocumented students and students in mixed-status families. By understanding these categories, educators, counselors, and community leaders can more effectively advocate for and guide undocumented students toward higher education and career opportunities in Washington.

Prospective Students

Undocumented students have the right to pursue higher education in Washington. There is no federal or state law that prohibits undocumented students from applying to, being admitted to, or enrolling in public or private universities, or community and technical colleges (CTCs) in Washington state.

In *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that all children in the United States have the right to a K-12 education, regardless of immigration status. While this ruling guarantees access to K-12 education, many undocumented students and their families may not know that opportunities continue after high school.

Washington state has opened pathways for undocumented students to continue their education by providing access to in-state tuition, state financial aid, and supportive campus resources.⁵ Continuing your education beyond high school can expand your career opportunities, increase your earning potential, and allow you to contribute to your family and community. This guide will help you understand your rights, explore your options, and navigate the process of applying to and paying for college in Washington state.

3. National Immigration Law Center, Basic Facts About In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students (Aug. 2021), www.nilc.org/issues/education/basic-facts-instate/

4. *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)

5. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), wsac.wa.gov/wasfa

Who Are Undocumented Students?

Undocumented students are individuals who were born outside the United States and live here without an official immigration status.⁶ This includes people who entered the U.S. without inspection or who overstayed a visa, with or without their parents, and who do not have lawful status such as a green card, refugee status, asylum, or a valid student visa.⁷

Undocumented students are part of our communities and schools.⁸ They are classmates, neighbors, and future contributors to Washington's workforce and economy.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

DACA is a policy that offers temporary protection from deportation and work authorization to certain undocumented individuals who came to the United States as children.⁹ Established by President Barack Obama on June 15, 2012, DACA provides renewable two-year periods of deferred action and eligibility for a Social Security number. Importantly, DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship.¹⁰

On September 5, 2017, the program was rescinded,¹¹ and new applications have not been accepted since then. However, individuals who currently have DACA can continue to apply for renewals.

DACA Eligibility Criteria¹²:

- **Under 31 years of age** as of June 15, 2012
- Arrived in the U.S. **before turning 16 years old**
- **Continuously resided in the U.S.** since June 15, 2007
- **Physically present in the U.S.** on June 15, 2012 and at the time of DACA application
- **Currently enrolled in school**, graduated from high school, obtained a GED, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces or Coast Guard
- **Have not been convicted of a felony**, significant misdemeanor, or three or more other misdemeanors

6. Migration Policy Institute, Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States (2024), www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US

7. National Immigration Law Center, Frequently Asked Questions: Immigrant Eligibility for Public Programs During COVID-19 (Apr. 2020) www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/faq-immigrant-eligibility-for-public-programs-during-covid-19/

8. National Immigration Law Center, Basic Facts About In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students (Aug. 2021), www.nilc.org/issues/education/basic-facts-instate/

9. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), www.uscis.gov/DACA

10. Migration Policy Institute, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles

11. Dept. of Homeland Security, Rescission of the June 15, 2012, Memorandum Entitled "Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United States as Children" (Sept. 5, 2017), www.dhs.gov/news/2017/09/05/memorandum-rescission-daca

12. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), www.uscis.gov/DACA

Non-DACA Undocumented Students

Not all undocumented students are eligible for or have DACA status. Some may have arrived after the cutoff date, missed the application window, or were too young to apply when the program was halted. These students, often referred to as **“non-DACA undocumented students,”** face additional challenges in accessing work opportunities but still have the right to pursue education in Washington.¹³

Mixed-Status Families

Many undocumented and DACA students live in **mixed-status families**.¹⁴ This term refers to households where members have different immigration statuses. For example:

- A student who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (green card holder) **but has one or more undocumented parents or siblings**
- A student who is undocumented or has DACA **but has family members who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents**¹⁵

Mixed-status families are common in Washington and across the U.S., and understanding these dynamics is important for schools, educators, and service providers to offer appropriate support and maintain student trust.¹⁶

II. IN-STATE TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Access to higher education can transform the lives of undocumented students and strengthen Washington’s communities and workforce. Washington is one of the states leading the way in expanding college access for undocumented students by providing in-state tuition and state financial aid, regardless of immigration status. Understanding these opportunities is essential for students, families, and educators working to ensure that all students can pursue their educational goals. This section explains how undocumented students can qualify for in-state tuition under Washington law and outlines available financial aid options, including the WASFA, designed to help make college more affordable for undocumented students in our state.

13. National Immigration Law Center, Dream Act, DACA, and Other Policies Designed to Protect Dreamers (Jan. 2023), <https://www.nilc.org/issues/immigration-reform-and-executive-actions/dreamact/>; Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), wsac.wa.gov/wasfa
14. Migration Policy Institute, Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States (2024), www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US
15. Jeffrey S. Passel & Jens Manuel Krogstad, What We Know About Unauthorized Immigrants Living in the U.S., Pew Rsch. Ctr. (July 22, 2024), www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/22/what-we-know-about-unauthorized-immigrants-living-in-the-us/
16. National Immigration Law Center, Education and Immigrant Students: Rights and Responsibilities (2022), www.nilc.org/issues/education/

In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students

Undocumented students may qualify for in-state tuition rates in Washington, helping to make college more affordable. In 2003, Washington passed **House Bill 1079**,¹⁷ allowing eligible undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, even if they lack legal immigration status.

Washington is one of 24 states plus the District of Columbia that offer in-state tuition to eligible undocumented students.¹⁸ This policy recognizes that investing in all students strengthens Washington's communities and workforce.

Eligibility for In-State Tuition (HB 1079):

- **You have graduated from a Washington high school** or earned a GED in Washington.
- **You have lived in Washington for at least one year before starting college.**
- **You submit a signed affidavit promising to apply for permanent residency when eligible.**

Financial Aid Options

Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA)

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to determine eligibility for federal grants, loans, and work-study programs. However:

- Eligible: U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens (permanent residents, refugees, asylees)
- Not Eligible: Undocumented students, including DACA recipients
- Eligible: U.S. citizens with undocumented parents can complete FAFSA and receive aid.

Note on FAFSA Changes:

In December 2023, the U.S. Department of Education released a new FAFSA form requiring contributors (including parents) to create FSA IDs using Social Security numbers.¹⁹ This created barriers for mixed-status families, as undocumented parents without SSNs have faced challenges in completing the FAFSA, delaying aid for eligible U.S. citizen students.

17. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.15.012(2)(e) (codifying HB 1079, in-state tuition for undocumented students)

18. National Immigration Law Center, Basic Facts About In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students (Aug. 2021), www.niilc.org/issues/education/basic-facts-instate/

19. U.S. Dept. of Educ., FAFSA Simplification Act Implementation (Dec. 2023), www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/fa-fafsa-simplification.html

Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)

Washington has created WASFA²⁰ to provide state financial aid to eligible undocumented students, including DACA recipients. The REAL Hope Act (SB 6523, 2014),²¹ the Washington State Dream Act (HB 1817, 2013),²² and the Our Colleges, Our Future Act (SB 5194, 2021)²³ expanded eligibility to undocumented students meeting residency requirements.

Eligibility for In-State Tuition (HB 1079):

- **Graduated from a Washington high school** or earned a GED in Washington
- **Lived in Washington for at least one year before starting college**
- **Signed the HB 1079 affidavit promising to apply for permanent residency when eligible**
- **Submitted the WASFA by the priority processing deadline**

Through WASFA, eligible students can access Washington College Grant and other state financial aid programs to help pay for college.

III. APPLYING TO WASHINGTON'S COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES (CTCS)

Washington's community and technical colleges (CTCs)²⁴ offer an affordable, accessible pathway for undocumented students to begin or continue their higher education journey. CTCs provide a variety of programs, including associate degrees, professional certificates, and, at many campuses, bachelor's degree options. This section will guide you through how to apply to a CTC in Washington, how to confirm your residency for in-state tuition, and what to expect as you pursue your education.

How to Apply to a CTC

To apply, you will need to:

- **Choose the community or technical college** you want to attend
- **Complete the college's application for admission** (most applications are available on each college's website)
- **Submit your residency affidavit** to qualify for in-state tuition under HB 1079 if you are undocumented
- **Complete the WASFA** (Washington Application for State Financial Aid)²⁵ if you are seeking state financial aid

20. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), wsac.wa.gov/wasfa

21. REAL Hope Act, S.B. 6523, 63d Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2014)

22. Washington State Dream Act, H.B. 1817, 63d Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2013)

23. Our Colleges, Our Future Act, S.B. 5194, 67th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2021)

24. Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, Explore Our Colleges, www.sbctc.edu/our-colleges/explore-colleges

25. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig



Residency Affidavit for In-State Tuition

Undocumented students can qualify for in-state tuition by submitting a residency affidavit under HB 1079.²⁶ To be eligible, you must:

Eligibility for In-State Tuition (HB 1079):

- **Earn a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent** before your first college term
- **Maintain a primary residence in Washington** for at least 12 consecutive months immediately before your first term
- **Promise to apply for permanent residency** as soon as you are eligible, and agree to engage in activities to prepare for citizenship (such as civics or citizenship courses)

Degrees Offered at CTCs

Associate Degrees

Community and technical colleges offer associate degrees,²⁷ typically requiring 90 credits, which are equivalent to about two years of full-time study. These degrees can help you enter the workforce directly or transfer to a four-year university to continue your education.

Bachelor's Degrees

Many Washington CTCs now offer bachelor of applied science (BAS) degrees²⁸ and other bachelor's degree²⁹ options in high-demand fields such as information technology, health care, and business. Program availability varies by campus, so check your college's website for specific offerings.

IV. APPLYING TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN WASHINGTON

Washington's public and private universities provide opportunities for undocumented students to continue their education and pursue their career goals. Applying to these universities requires understanding deadlines, required documents, and financial aid options available to you. This section will guide you through what you need to know to apply as a freshman or transfer student, including information about testing, transcripts, in-state tuition, and financial aid.

26. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.15.012(2)(e) (codifying HB 1079, in-state tuition for undocumented students)

27. Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Types of Degrees, www.sbctc.edu/becoming-a-student/right-degree-you/types-of-degrees

28. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.50.810 (2024), app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.50.810

29. Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, Bachelor's Degree Programs, www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/bachelors-degrees/

Standardized Testing (SAT or ACT)

Public universities in Washington **do not require SAT or ACT scores**³⁰ as part of the admissions process. However, if you are applying to universities outside Washington, some may still require these test scores. Check each college's requirements to confirm. SAT scores are typically valid for five years from the test date.

Transcripts

If you graduated in the U.S.: Do not send transcripts unless the Office of Admission requests them.

If you graduated outside the U.S.: You will need to upload a scanned, unofficial copy of your transcripts for grades 9 and higher as part of your application.³¹

Applying for Financial Aid (WASFA)

Undocumented students in Washington can apply for state financial aid through the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA),³² which is separate from the federal FAFSA and designed specifically for undocumented students and others ineligible for federal aid. While designed to address a specific gap, the application is open to any student choosing not to apply for federal aid, for any reason..

To apply:

- Visit: <https://wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig>
- Review the guide and eligibility requirements
- Complete and submit your WASFA by your college's priority deadline

Residency Affidavit for In-State Tuition

Undocumented students seeking in-state tuition at public universities in Washington must submit a residency affidavit (HB 1079 affidavit).³³ To qualify, you must:

- **Earn a high school diploma**, GED, or equivalent before your first term
- **Maintain a primary residence in Washington** for at least 12 consecutive months before starting college
- **Promise to apply for permanent residency** when eligible and participate in activities preparing you for citizenship

31. University of Washington, Transcripts and College Coursework for International Students, admit.washington.edu/apply/international/transcripts/

32. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig

33. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.15.012(2)(e) (codifying HB 1079, in-state tuition for undocumented students)

Applying as a Freshman

Most Washington universities open applications for freshman admissions³⁴ on **September 1**, with deadlines typically in **early January** for fall quarter admissions. Check your intended college's website for specific dates, especially if applying for other quarters.

You can apply using:

- The Common App (<https://www.commonapp.org>)
- **ApplyWeb** (varies by institution)

Requirements typically include:

- **Completing College Academic Distribution Requirements** (CADRs)
- **A minimum GPA of 2.0** (check each college's specific requirements)
- **Application fees** (usually \$50–\$90; fee waivers may be available)

Admission to Majors: Some programs offer direct admission to your major at the time of application. Check your intended department's website for deadlines and requirements.

Applying as a Transfer Student

Most universities in Washington open applications for transfer students³⁵ on **December 1** for fall quarter admissions. Deadlines for other quarters vary by school, so check your intended university's admissions page.

Admission to majors:

- Many programs require a separate application for admission to your major.
- Some campuses offer direct admission to your major during the application process.

Deadlines for major applications vary by department, so review your program's website for specifics.

34. University of Washington, Freshman Application Process, admit.washington.edu/apply/freshman/

35. University of Washington, Transfer Application Process, admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/

V. PURSUING PROFESSIONAL CAREERS AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Undocumented students in Washington have pathways to pursue professional careers and financial independence after completing their education. Recent state legislation has expanded opportunities to obtain professional licenses regardless of immigration status, and tools such as the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) can help undocumented individuals engage in work, entrepreneurship, and financial activities. **This section explains your options to prepare for your professional future while living in Washington.**

Professional Licensure for Undocumented Individuals

In 2024, Washington passed **House Bill 1889**,³⁶ which allows individuals to obtain professional licenses and certifications regardless of immigration status as long as they meet all other licensure requirements, including education, examinations, and training.

- This law allows undocumented individuals, including those without DACA, to pursue careers in fields such as **health care, cosmetology, and other licensed professions in Washington.**
- It is important to note that **this law does not provide a work permit or authorization to work under federal law**; it allows you to hold a state license, which can support your professional goals.

Using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)

An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)³⁷ is issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to individuals who are not eligible for a Social Security Number but need to report earnings and pay taxes in the United States.

ITIN can help you:

- Report earnings to the IRS
- Open a bank account
- Establish credit
- Start a business
- Receive an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for business operations

Obtaining an ITIN does not change your immigration status or provide work authorization, but it can be a valuable tool for financial independence and stability.

36. H.B. 1889, 68th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2024).

37. Immigrants Rising, Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) Guide (June 2022), immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_ITIN-Guide.pdf



Scholarships, Fellowships, and Internships for Undocumented Students

VI. SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND INTERNSHIPS FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Scholarships, fellowships, and internships can help undocumented students pay for college, support living expenses, and gain valuable career experience. Washington state and many private funders provide opportunities for undocumented students to access financial aid, even when federal aid is unavailable. **This section will guide you through the types of funding and programs you can explore to support your education and professional development.**

Scholarships Through School Foundations

Most colleges and universities in Washington have **campus foundations that offer scholarships** to students.³⁸ Many of these scholarships are open to undocumented students regardless of immigration status. Check with your college's financial aid office or scholarship office to learn about available opportunities.

Washington College Grant

Undocumented students in Washington who meet eligibility criteria can receive state grants through the **Washington College Grant program**,³⁹ helping to cover tuition and other costs at community colleges, technical colleges, and universities.

Federal Funding

Undocumented students, including DACA recipients, are not eligible for federal financial aid (FAFSA) under current law.⁴⁰

Private Scholarships and Fellowships

Many **private organizations and foundations** offer scholarships and fellowships specifically for undocumented students, regardless of immigration status. These opportunities may be based on academic achievement, community involvement, or intended career fields.

For a comprehensive, regularly updated list of scholarships and fellowships that do not require U.S. citizenship, see Immigrants Rising's resource library:

- Immigrants Rising, List of Scholarships and Fellowships, <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/>

38. Washington Student Achievement Council, Paying for College: Types of Aid, wsac.wa.gov/college-bound/types-of-aid

39. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington College Grant, wsac.wa.gov/wcg

40. U.S. Dept. of Education., Federal Student Aid: Non-U.S. Citizens, studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens



Scholarships, Fellowships, and Internships for Undocumented Students

Fellowships: Funding, Career Experience, and Skill Building

Fellowships⁴¹ are structured opportunities that can provide funding while also giving you professional experience, much like an internship. They can be a valuable way to earn money to cover living expenses while developing skills in your field of interest, expanding your professional network, and gaining exposure to potential career paths.

Examples of fellowships may include:

- Research positions
- Community organizing or policy fellowships
- Pre-law or pre-health fellowships
- Fellowships with nonprofit organizations

Fellowships are often available to undocumented students, and many organizations specifically support undocumented youth seeking professional growth opportunities.

Internships

Internships provide hands-on experience in your field of interest and can help you build professional connections while developing your skills.⁴² Some internships are paid, providing additional financial support during your studies. Undocumented students can often participate in internships, particularly if the positions are stipend based or do not require employment authorization. Check with your college's career center and organizations in your field of interest for internship opportunities open to undocumented students.

Student Loans in Washington

In 2020, Washington passed SB 6561,⁴³ creating the Undocumented Student Support Loan Program to help undocumented students pay for college expenses. However, as of 2025, the program is not currently funded due to budget constraints in the state's biennial budget.⁴⁴ While the law remains in effect, no new loans are being issued under this program until funding is restored. **If you are considering loans, it's important to understand alternative options, repayment requirements, and how they fit into your long-term financial plans.** Speak with your college's financial aid office to learn more about current resources available to undocumented students.

41. Immigrants Rising, List of Scholarships and Fellowships, immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/

42. Immigrants Rising, Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students, immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/

43. Wash. S.B. 6561, 66th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2020) (codified at Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.92.200 et seq.). Session Law: Laws of 2020, ch. 326, § 1

44. Wash. ESSB 5167, 69th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025) (enacted) (codified in session laws at ch. 424, Laws of 2025). Available at Office of Financial Management – 2025-27 (ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/2025-27-enacted-budgets) Enacted Budgets and Governor's Veto Letter (May 20, 2025), governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/5167.pdf



VII. CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT

Washington's colleges and universities offer a range of campus resources to help undocumented students meet their basic needs, support their academic success, and protect their privacy. These resources can include access to food, housing support, emergency aid, child care assistance, health insurance options, and culturally responsive guidance from campus offices. Understanding these resources can help you navigate challenges while staying focused on your education.

Benefit Hubs

In 2023, Washington passed **HB 1559**,⁴⁵ expanding **Benefit Hubs** to every college campus in the state to ensure that students have access to basic needs services.

Benefit Hubs can connect you to:

- Housing support
- Food access and grocery delivery
- Utility bill assistance
- Other basic needs resources

Emergency Aid

Most colleges and universities in Washington continue to offer **emergency aid** to students facing financial hardship. This support can help cover urgent expenses such as food, housing, medical costs, or transportation. Check your college's website or contact the financial aid office to learn how to apply for available aid.

Additionally, while students previously benefited from federal funds distributed under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)—authorized by the CARES Act of 2020⁴⁶ and extended through CRRSAA and ARP—HEERF funding has now ended. As of 2025, no new funds are available through this federal program, and all allocated resources have been fully expended.

If you need assistance today, explore your college's aid programs or apply for state-supported resources like the Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG),⁴⁷ which is funded for the 2025-26 academic year.⁴⁸

45. Wash. H.B. 1559, 68th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2023)

46. Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281 (2020)

47. 2SHB 1893, 66th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2019)

48. Wash. State Bd. for Cmty. & Tech. Colls., Student Emergency Assistance Grant Program Guidelines, FY 2025-26 (2025), available at www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/grants/student-emergency-assistance-grant-program/fy26-seag-guidelines.pdf



Child Care Assistance

In 2023, SB 5225 (**Working Connections**)⁴⁹ expanded child care assistance to undocumented students enrolled at community and technical colleges in Washington, helping student parents balance educational goals with family responsibilities.

Undocumented Student Support and DEI Offices

Many campuses have **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices or Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) programs** that provide culturally responsive support for undocumented and BIPOC students.⁵⁰ These offices can:

- Help you navigate college systems
- Connect you to scholarships and resources
- Provide advocacy and community support

Contact your college's DEI or multicultural office to learn what support is available for undocumented students.

Privacy Protections (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974⁵¹ protects the privacy of student education records at all educational institutions receiving federal funding, including for undocumented students. This means your immigration status and personal information in your educational records are confidential and cannot be shared without your consent.

Health Insurance Options

Starting November 1, 2023, all Washington residents—regardless of immigration status—became eligible to purchase health and dental insurance through Washington Healthplanfinder.⁵² As of 2025, low-income undocumented immigrants may also qualify for state-funded premium subsidies through Cascade Care Savings, and a Medicaid-like program is available for those under 138% of the federal poverty level, though enrollment is currently capped due to limited funding.⁵³

49. Wash. S.B. 5225, 68th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2023)

50. Washington Student Achievement Council, Supporting Undocumented Students, wsac.wa.gov/supporting-undocumented-students

51. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g

52. Washington Healthplanfinder, Health Coverage for Immigrants, <https://www.wahealthplanfinder.org>

53. Wash. State Health Care Auth., Apple Health Expansion, www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/apple-health-medicare/apple-health-expansion



Beyond Undergraduate: Graduate School, Professional School, and Building Your Career

VIII. BEYOND UNDERGRADUATE: GRADUATE SCHOOL, PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL, AND BUILDING YOUR CAREER

Pursuing education after your undergraduate degree can expand your career options, deepen your expertise, and increase your earning potential. As an undocumented student, you can access graduate and professional pathways, secure fellowships and scholarships, and build financial independence through entrepreneurship or individual contracting.

This section will help you understand your options, how to prepare, and where to find support for your journey beyond your bachelor's degree.

Graduate School vs. Professional School

Graduate schools offer advanced study and research in specific academic disciplines, such as earning a master's or PhD in fields like education, social work, or engineering.⁵⁴

Professional schools prepare you for specific careers that require licenses, such as law or medicine. Examples include law school (JD programs) and medical school (MD or DO programs).

Key Differences:

- **Graduate programs** focus on research, theory, and advanced academic study.
- **Professional schools** prepare you to enter licensed professions through specialized training.

Choosing Your Path

Before applying, consider:

- **Interests:** Choose a field you are excited about, as graduate and professional programs typically last 2–5+ years.
- **Career Goals:** Some careers require specific degrees. Research what education your desired career path requires.
- **Budget and Timeline:** Master's programs often take 2 years, while PhD programs may take 4+ years. Professional programs vary in length and cost.⁵⁵

54. U.S. Dept. of Education, Graduate and Professional School, studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/graduate

55. Immigrants Rising, Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students, immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/



Beyond Undergraduate: Graduate School, Professional School, and Building Your Career

Applying to Graduate and Professional School

The application process differs by program but generally includes:

- **Résumé:** Summarizing your academic achievements, work/volunteer experience, and awards
- **Transcripts:** Official records from your undergraduate institution(s)
- Letters of Recommendation (LORs): Professors or employers write these to support your application, describing your skills and readiness for graduate-level work.
- **Personal Statement:** A written essay explaining your goals, experiences, and why you are a good fit for the program. Check each school's website for specific prompts and requirements.

Additional Tips:

- **Research your programs early** to understand prerequisites and deadlines.
- **Contact admissions offices**⁵⁶ to clarify eligibility for undocumented students.
- **Explore potential funding** through scholarships and fellowships available to undocumented students.

Testing Requirements

Graduate School (GRE)

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is used by many graduate programs in the U.S. It costs around \$200 and is valid for five years. Many programs are waiving GRE requirements, so check your specific program before registering.⁵⁷

Professional School (Law: LSAT & CAS)

- **Credential Assembly Service (CAS):** Required for law school applicants to manage transcripts, LORs, and documents (\$195 for five years)
- **LSAT:** Standardized law school admission test (\$238 as of 2025)
- **Fee Waivers:** Available to qualifying applicants; check eligibility.⁵⁸

Pre-Law Support for Undocumented Students:

Immigrants Rising offers:

- **Pre-Law Bootcamp:** A 4-day intensive resource program for undocumented students. <https://immigrantsrising.org/pre-law-program/pre-law-bootcamp/>
- **Pre-Law Fund:** A \$2,500 stipend to cover LSAT prep and application fees (requires Bootcamp participation). <https://immigrantsrising.org/pre-law-program/pre-law-fund/>

56. University of Washington Graduate School, Admissions FAQs, grad.uw.edu/admission/faq/

57. Educational Testing Service (ETS), GRE General Test, www.ets.org/gre

58. Law School Admission Council (LSAC), Applying to Law School, www.lsac.org



Beyond Undergraduate: Graduate School, Professional School, and Building Your Career

Paying for Graduate and Professional School

WASFA

Undocumented students who have completed a bachelor's degree are not eligible for new WASFA grants, but some may receive up to a \$12,000/year tuition waiver if previously enrolled under WASFA.

Scholarships and Fellowships

Many graduate and professional programs offer:

- **Merit-Based Scholarships:** Based on achievements
- **Conditional Scholarships:** Tied to specific program requirements
- **Need-Based Scholarships:** Based on financial need

Undocumented students cannot receive federal loans but may seek private scholarships and fellowships, including:

- **Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans**
- **Ford Foundation Predoctoral and Dissertation Fellowships**
- **National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship**
- **University of Washington Graduate Student Equity & Excellence programs**

Negotiating your aid package is often possible—do not hesitate to ask your program for additional funding.

Public vs. Private Universities

- **Private Universities** often provide larger aid packages through private funds but have higher tuition.
- **Public Universities** may have lower tuition, but out-of-state rates may apply, and state/federal aid may not be sufficient for undocumented students.

Entrepreneurship⁶² and Independent Contracting⁶³

- Start a business
- Engage in independent contracting (often as a 1099 contractor)
- Build professional services income while practicing your trade

Many undocumented students pursue entrepreneurship or consulting as a pathway to financial independence while building career skills.

60. Washington Student Achievement Council, WASFA, wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig

60. Immigrants Rising, Graduate and Professional School Guide, immigrantsrising.org/resource/graduate-school-guide/

61. Immigrants Rising, Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students, immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/

62. Immigrants Rising, Helping Students Get Their UndocuHustle On: Introduction to Entrepreneurship (Lesson Plan), immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_Introduction-to-Entrepreneurship-Lesson-Plan.pdf

63. UndocuProfessionals Network, Independent Contracting Resources, undocuprofessionals.net



APPENDIX: OTHER RESOURCES

This appendix provides a curated list of resources to support immigrant students and families, organized by theme and jurisdiction to help educators, advocates, and community organizations navigate the complex landscape of immigration-related services. Divided into Washington state-specific and national efforts, these resources span critical areas such as legal protections, educational access, financial aid, mental health, professional development, and community advocacy. From state-level policies like the Keep Washington Working Act and WASFA guidance, to national programs like TheDream.US and Immigrants Rising, this collection aims to equip stakeholders with actionable tools and up-to-date information that foster safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments for all immigrant students.

Washington State	
Legal & Policy Protections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSPI Guidance on Protections for Immigrant Students: Outlines key practices for K-12 public schools, including enrollment rights, data privacy, and how schools should respond to immigration enforcement.• Keep Washington Working Act: Prohibits state agencies and schools from assisting federal immigration enforcement, ensuring safe zones for students.• Governor's Executive Order 17-01: Reaffirms Washington's commitment to tolerance and inclusiveness for immigrant residents.
Education & Financial Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC): Offers financial aid options like WASFA for undocumented and DACA students, plus guidance on residency and tuition.• Seattle Council PTSA Resource List: Includes organizations supporting immigrant youth and families, plus legal and education resources.



Washington State	
Community & Advocacy Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAIN): The largest immigrant-led coalition in WA. Offers a deportation defense hotline (1-844-724-3737) and a bilingual resource finder. • Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP): Provides free legal consultations and Know Your Rights materials. • Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC): Partners with NWIRP to offer immigrant safety planning and legal support.
School & Educator Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington Education Association (WEA) Guidance: Offers best practices for educators, including FERPA protections and emergency planning for families. • NEA Immigration Guidance Booklet: Includes sample Safe Zone policies and resources for school districts.
National	
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration: A coalition of college and university leaders advocating for inclusive immigration policies in higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Ed Immigration Portal: A digital hub with data, policy analysis, and tools for supporting undocumented, DACA, refugee, and international students. • Campus to Career Guide: Practical steps for noncitizen students navigating employment-based visas. • Legal Pathways Hub: Resources for institutions to support students with DACA, TPS, and other statuses. • Policy Briefs & Toolkits: Covering topics like tuition equity, refugee access, and DACA updates.
National Immigration Law Center (NILC): Focused on defending and advancing the rights of low-income immigrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Toolkit: Includes tuition equity laws, state-by-state access maps, and advocacy tools. • Know Your Rights for Students & Schools: Co-developed with United We Dream and AFT, includes emergency planning and educator guidance. • Policy Fact Sheets: Covering DACA, financial aid access, and state legislation.
United We Dream: The largest immigrant youth-led network in the U.S., empowering undocumented students and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Library: Guides on DACA, deportation defense, and community organizing. • Education Justice Guide: Support for educators and school staff working with immigrant and refugee children. • Notifica App: A secure app for emergency planning and alerts during enforcement actions.



Appendix

National	
<p>American Immigration Council: Provides research, legal support, and advocacy to shape fair immigration policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools & Resources Hub: Includes educator materials, policy explainers, and state-level data. • Immigration Where You Live: Interactive maps showing immigrant demographics and economic contributions by state. • Legal Education & FOIA Resources: For attorneys and advocates supporting immigrant students.
<p>Immigrants Rising: Empowers undocumented young people to pursue education, careers, and entrepreneurship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Library: Covers financial aid, mental health, legal options, and institutional practices. • Scholarship Lists: Includes fellowships that don't require proof of citizenship. • Entrepreneurship Guides: Step-by-step support for freelancing and starting a business without work authorization. • UndocuEducators & UndocuBlack Initiatives: Tailored support for educators and Black undocumented students.
<p>TheDream.US: The largest college access and success program for undocumented students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National & Opportunity Scholarships: Up to \$39,000 for tuition and fees at partner colleges. • Partner Colleges: Nearly 80 institutions across 20+ states. • Student Success Resources: Academic advising, career support, and community building.
<p>Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI): Focuses on racial justice and migrant rights for Black immigrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know Your Rights Workshops: Held in the U.S. and Mexico for Black migrant communities. • Legal Clinics & FOIA Litigation: Exposes abuses in detention and policing. • Black Migrant Ecosystem Convenings: Build solidarity and leadership across Black immigrant communities.
<p>My Undocumented Life: A volunteer-run platform offering resources and community for undocumented students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarship Database: Regularly updated with national and local opportunities. • Mental Health & Emergency Planning Guides: Include family preparedness and rapid-response networks. • Faculty & Ally Toolkits: Practical steps for supporting students in schools and colleges.
<p>UnDocuProfessionals A national community supporting undocumented individuals transitioning from student to professional life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship & Career Coaching: One-on-one guidance and workshops. • UndocuAlly Training: For educators and practitioners. • Job Board & Non-Employment Opportunities: Internships, fellowships, and independent contracting resources.