CA Dream Act Background and Eligibility

Q. What is the California Dream Act?

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. Who Can Apply for the California Dream Act?

Students who live in California and meet the eligibility requirements of Assembly Bill (AB) 540 or AB 2000, as well as students who have a U Visa or TPS status, can use the California Dream Act application (CADAA).

Q. What is the difference between the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the California Dream Act application?

The eligibility requirements based on citizenship are completely different for each of these. See below for more details:

1) You are eligible to complete the FAFSA at https://fafsa.ed.gov/ if you are a:

Person who has a Social Security number who is either:

- A U.S. Citizen
- An eligible non-citizen, per the FAFSA definition, or
- The holder of a T-visa
- A U.S. Citizen, eligible non-citizen or the holder of a T - Visa whose parent is undocumented

2) You are eligible to complete the Dream Act Application (CADAA) at www.caldreamact.org if you are a:

Student who is not eligible to file the FAFSA and you:

- Meet the requirements of AB 540 or AB 2000 and/or
- Reside in California with a U-Visa or
- Reside in California with a Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

Q. What should I do if I've already submitted a FAFSA before learning that I should submit a CADAA?

Complete the CADAA, and then complete the Application Conversion Form; you can submit the form to the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC). Then, contact the financial aid office at the institution you plan to attend.

If you have further questions, including how to ensure you have the proper application on file, review the Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FCs) How to Guarantee You Use the Correct Application flyer.

Q. What is AB 540 and how do I obtain AB 540 status?

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.

If you have Temporary Protected Status or hold a U Visa you may be eligible for the California Dream Act and should apply using the CADAA. If you have Temporary Protected Status or hold a U Visa you may be eligible for the California Dream Act and should apply using the CADAA.

To obtain 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. What is AB 2000 and how does it relate to AB 540?

AB 2000 passed in 2014 and is an expansion of AB 540. It increases the scope of student eligibility for students who graduated early from a California High School with the equivalent of three or more years of credits. If a student graduates early, they must have attended CA elementary or secondary schools for a cumulative total of 3 or more years.

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

Yes, students who meet the AB 540 eligibility requirements are not required to have a Social Security number in order to submit the application.

Q. What is a "U" or "T" Visa?

The "U" Visa provides eligible crime victims with legal status to temporarily remain in the U.S. while assisting law enforcement. The "T" Visa is set aside for those who are or have been victims of human trafficking, protects victims of human trafficking and allows victims to remain in the United States to assist in an investigation or prosecution of human trafficking. AB 1899 allows "T" and "U" Visa holders to be eligible to apply for, and participate in, all student financial aid programs and scholarships administered by a public postsecondary educational institution or the State of California.

Q. Are "temporary" nonimmigrant visa holders eligible to complete the CADAA?

No, students who hold a temporary nonimmigrant visa are not eligible to submit an application. The exception is the U Visa.

Q. I have a Social Security card but it says "VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION." Can I file the FAFSA?

A Social Security card with this designation is issued to people lawfully admitted to the United States on a temporary basis who have Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authorization to work. If you meet the requirements detailed in previous questions, you may file the CADAA.

Q. I have a Social Security number but it says "NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT." Can I file the FAFSA?

Social Security cards with this designation are issued to people lawfully admitted to the United States without work authorization from DHS, but have a valid non-work reason for needing a Social Security number. If you meet the requirements detailed in previous questions, you may file the CADAA.

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

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 California College Promise Grant (CCPG), and private scholarships administered through institutions. Eligible students attending the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) may be eligible for the Dream Loan. Your school will determine your financial aid eligibility. We encourage you to submit the CADAA by March 2nd, because it is the deadline to receive consideration for most types of aid available to you.

How to apply for the CA Dream Act

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

The 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 non-citizens such as permanent residents should complete the FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.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 2nd prior to the academic year. For Cal Grants offered under the California Dream Act, a certified GPA must also be submitted by the deadline.

Q. When will the CADAA be available?

The online and paper application for the next academic year will be available October 1st. For faster processing time, the CSAC recommends using the online application process.

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

You can visit your Financial Aid Office (FAO) or School Counselor/Advisor, or you can attend a Cash for College workshop.

Q. Does my parent's citizenship affect my eligibility for financial aid under the California Dream Act?

No, your parents' citizenship status does not impact your eligibility to receive California Dream Act financial aid.

Q. Am I required to be registered for the Selective Service?

If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 25, in most cases you are required to register with the Selective Service System (SSS) and show proof of registration to your institution before receiving state financial aid. The SSS does not share your immigration status.

Note: you cannot register online if you do not have a Social Security number. It can take one to two months to receive proof of registration after the form is submitted. For more information, visit the Selective Service website: www.sss.gov.

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

No. The CADAA is now using prior-prior-year tax information. If you or your parents did not earn enough in the prior-prior year to file taxes, simply select "Will not file" on the tax filing question in the application.

Example of Prior-Prior Tax year:

When a Student is Attending College (school year)	When a Student Can Submit a FAFSA	Which Year's Income Information is Required
July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018	October 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018	2015
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019	October 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019	2016

Application Deadline and Parent Signature Info

Q. When is the deadline to submit the CADAA?

Students are encouraged to apply by the March 2nd priority deadline to ensure they are considered for all financial aid for which they might be eligible. However, students should still apply even if they miss the deadline for Cal Grants and the Middle Class Scholarship. Limited funds may still be available at some schools.

Q. Should I fill out the CA Dream Act Application if I miss the March 2nd deadline?

Students who apply after the March 2nd deadline will not be considered for Cal Grants or the Middle Class Scholarship. Students who apply after March 2nd will still be considered for limited aid including the California College Promise Grant (CCPG) at community colleges and institutional grants at some CSUs and UCs. The CSAC has junior and senior Financial Aid Checklists to help you plan and meet important deadlines.

Q. How does my parent sign my application?

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. After completing this step, your parent will be issued a 4-digit electronic PIN code to sign your online 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. What if my parents live in another county, and I live with my aunt/boyfriend/sibling/roommate?

If you are 24 years old or younger, and do not meet any of the independent student criteria, you must provide your parent's information and one parent must sign your application, even if you do not live with your legal parents (your biological and/or adoptive parents). 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 situation and inform you if they can override the need for parent information. The CSAC does not have the authority to override dependency or financial information.

After Submitting Your Application

Q. How do I fix mistakes on my CADAA?

After you submit your application, review the Confirmation Page to identify and fix any errors that need correction. After the initial successful submission of your application, the 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 the CSAC.

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

After completing the CADAA, the 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, your GPA must be submitted to the CSAC by the March 2nd deadline. California law requires that by, October 1, 2018, all public and charter high schools electronically upload GPAs for current enrolled seniors that do not opt out.

Qualifying for a Cal Grant is not automatic as it is a need-based program. You must meet financial income and asset eligibility and GPA requirements. After receiving your CADAA and GPA, the 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 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 (SSN)?

The CSAC Non-SSN GPA submission process allows high schools, high school districts or private school central offices to submit GPAs for students without including a SSN. California law requires that by, October 1, 2018, all public and charter high schools electronically upload GPAs for current enrolled seniors that do not opt out.

You can download the paper Cal Grant Non-SSN GPA Verification form and fill out the top portion. Your school must verify your GPA and sign the bottom of the form. The form must be mailed to the CSAC on or before the March 2nd deadline.

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?

If you meet the requirements detailed in previous questions, you may file the CADAA. Furthermore, eligible students may qualify for other types of aid such as:

- Chafee Grant
- Cal Grants
- Scholarships offered through California public colleges and universities
- California College Promise Grant (CCPG) from California Community Colleges
- Private grants and scholarships

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

You must set up a WebGrants 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 https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/logon.asp to create an account. If you are not attending the college that is listed, submit a school change through WebGrants for Students.

Your college is in charge of disbursing all Cal Grant payments. Check your financial aid portal, Financial Aid Office (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 college immediately to see if your financial aid file is incomplete.

Q. How do I renew my Cal Grant?

If you received a 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 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 2nd deadline following the same procedure outlined in the paragraph above. If you have never submitted a CADAA, go to www.caldreamact.org, choosing the "Start New Application" option.

Q. What is the Dream Loan?

Senate Bill 1210 establishes the California DREAM Loan Program for purposes of extending loans to students who meet the requirements established by AB 540 and have demonstrated a financial need. The DREAM Loan authorizes any campus of the University of California or the California State University to participate. California community colleges are not authorized to participate.

Eligible students should contact their school for more information.

Q. Is it safe for me to apply for the CADAA?

The CSAC Director Lupita Cortez Alcalá released a joint statement with the California Department of Education stating "Regardless of what happens at the federal level, state financial aid for Dreamers remains legal in California. A Dreamer student does not need to be DACA-certified to be eligible for a public education or state financial aid. Losing DACA status will not affect most state financial aid…The information provided via the California Dream Act Application is used solely to determine eligibility for state financial aid and isn't shared with the federal government or used for immigration enforcement purposes. The CSAC will protect this information to the fullest extent of the law." You can read full statement here.