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Building a **welcoming community** and creating opportunities where Latino families can **belong**, **contribute**, and **succeed**.

Construyendo una **comunidad acogedora** y creando oportunidades donde las familias latinas pueden **pertenecer**, **contribuir** y **prosperar**.



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Our mission
Nuestra misión



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Cultural Competency & Understanding Latino Families



Who are Latinos?

Latino/Latinx/Latine/Hispanic - sometimes used interchangeably

- Latino/Latina = anyone from Latin America or born to Latin American parents, but not necessarily Spanish speakers (Brazil, Haiti)
- Latinx = a gender neutral version of term above.
- Latine = another gender neutral version of the term
- Hispanic = anyone from a Spanish-speaking country (includes Spain) but excludes non-Spanish speakers from Latin America
- All of these terms denote an ethnic group with some shared geography and *some* common culture, heritage, and language.

Immigrants = a person living in a country other than that of their place of birth.

- Not all Latino students are immigrants. **About 65% of American Latinos are born in the U.S.**

A note on English Language Learners = not all Latino students are EL students; not all EL students are immigrants.

Understanding Latino Cultural Norms

- Present vs. Future
- Personal/Relationship Oriented vs. Time/Professional
- **Engage families early**
- Building a college-going culture for students starts in 9th grade
- Partner with cultural experts
- Demonstrate openness, warmth, and interest in whole child

Pause for Reflection

- Questions?

Turn to a partner and spend 4 minutes on these:

- Have you seen this reflected in your own work? If so, how?
- Now that you know this, how will it impact your practice?



Latino Families & College Aspirations

- Family context/perceptions are extremely important. Culturally, big decisions tend to be made as a family unit.
- Parental aspirations for their children are very high, but many parents don't know how to support their children in the application process.
- Most families are very supportive of the college-going process, but some prioritize work or care-taking responsibilities for younger siblings because of economic needs.
- Many parents don't want their children to attend out of state institutions.
- Families have a lot of questions regarding financial aid, but don't know where to start or what to ask.

All families want the best for their children.

Students & College Going Culture

- Most of our students are first-generation college students in the U.S. Some students might have had parents attend college in their country of origin but are unfamiliar with the process here.
- Some students feel disillusioned by the college-going process and might need support to think about their long-term vision. Others have been told that it's not going to be possible, either because of money or immigration status, and need consistent and **early** positive messaging.
- DACA and other undocumented students are a diverse group who are not individually distinguishable from every other student.
- Some undocumented/DACA students have been living and attending U.S. schools for most of their lives, while some might have arrived in their middle school or high school years. Context and language skills may affect college going aspirations.

Immigration 101: Terms & Statuses

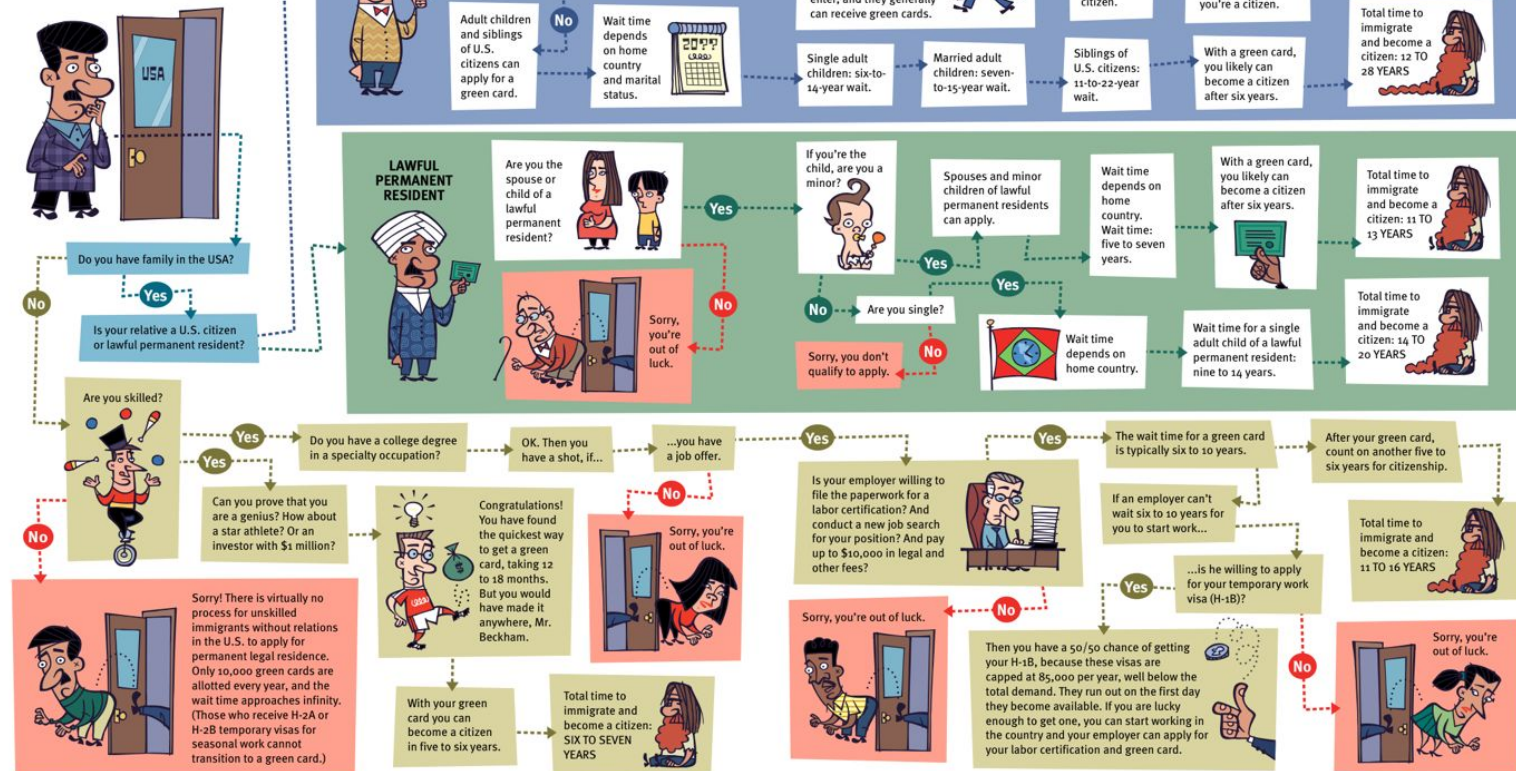


What Part of Legal Immigration Don't You Understand?

Mike Flynn and Shikha Dalmia

Illustrated by Terry Colon

Opponents of illegal immigration are fond of telling foreigners to "get in line" before coming to work in America. But what does that line actually look like, and how many years (or decades) does it take to get through? Try it yourself!



Language & Terms

Undocumented: Lacking appropriate documentation to establish permanent residency (Green Card)

Unauthorized: Lacking authorization to be present and/or living in the United States

DACA: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

DREAMers/DACAmented: Youth who benefit from enactment of DREAM Act

Mixed Status: Households where at least one member a citizen or permanent resident, and others may be undocumented.

Illegal/Alien: Negative; dehumanizes and demonizes

Immigration Term - TPS

TPS: Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is granted to eligible foreign-born individuals. Individuals are granted the right to live and work in the US until DHS ends their TPS status.

- Focuses on citizens of nations with ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war), an environmental disaster (such as earthquake or hurricane), or an epidemic, other extraordinary and temporary conditions.
- **Once status expires, there is no legal pathway to residency or citizenship.**

The U.S. currently provides Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to over 400,000 foreign nationals from 10 countries. Since 2017, the Department of Homeland Security has let TPS expire for **Haiti and Sudan**. In that same time, **Nicaragua, Honduras, Nepal, and El Salvador also expired**, but as of just last month these terminations were rescinded. However, these nations have only been extended until 2025.

Students with TPS are not eligible for federal financial aid.

Immigration Terms: U Visa

- **U Visa** - This is a visa type (granted for 4 years) for those living in the US who are a victim of violent crimes and participate with the police by filing a police report. **It costs \$585 to file.** Only 10,000 granted per year and USCIS is typically 3 years behind in reading and processing applications. Many also apply for a waiver for forgiveness for having entered or remained without documents. After 3 years can apply for permanent residency

Students with U Visas are not eligible for federal financial aid.

Immigration Terms: Asylum vs Refugee Status

- **Asylum & Refugee** – A status given to foreign-born individuals who must prove that they have a fear of persecution in their country of nationality that is well-founded because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion.
- **To seek asylum, someone must present themselves in person at a port of entry into the U.S. and request an asylum interview.** Applicants go through an initial interview and then are assigned to a court case within the immigration court system (where the same legal rights are not granted; i.e. are not guaranteed a lawyer). Currently, applicants are released into the U.S. to await their court dates (previously they could be jailed or were forced to remain at the border due to the Remain in Mexico policy.)
- **Refugees apply from outside the US** – there is a legal cap set by Congress each year. Refugees pass through many checks including interviews, fingerprinting, background checks, which can take years.

Immigration Terms:

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals - This was an Executive Action announced by former president Obama in 2012. It allows the holder to obtain a work authorization and a social security number to work legally, and prevents deportation. **It is NOT a legal status and has no pathway to any legal status.**

Must have arrived before 2007 and age of 16, be in school or have graduated, have no criminal history other than driving incidents. It costs \$495 to file and can be renewed every 2 years.

DACAmented students do not count as “residents” of a TN and are not eligible for federal financial aid. Some states have Dream Act or Tuition Equity laws to enable students to access state aid.

DACA Updates

DACA processing times varied - 1.5 to 6 months for a renewal and 5 to 10.5 months for an initial application.

Presently, those who currently have DACA can file for renewals of their DACA and work permits. The federal government is currently accepting renewals **but not granting or even processing**, applications from first-time applicants.

Further, the government has chosen, without explanation, to treat renewal applications from DACA recipients whose previous DACA grant expired more than one year ago as first-time DACA applications, which it cannot decide on under the Texas court's decision that has now been affirmed by the Fifth Circuit.

DACA Resources

Locally:

- TIRRC (Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition)
- JFON (Justice for Our Neighbors)
- Conexión Américas

Follow/check on:

- United We Dream, Immigrants Rising

Why it Matters

- Immigration status matters when it comes to financial aid and determine eligibility. Eligible non-citizens include:
 - Conditional permanent residents
 - Lawful permanent residents
 - **Refugees**
 - **Asylum Granted**
- Students with **asylum pending** status are **not** eligible for federal financial aid.
- This is just scratching the surface - there's many more eligible and ineligible statuses that we can't cover today...



**Be a
U.S. CITIZEN or
U.S. NATIONAL**

You are a U.S. citizen if you were born in the United States or certain U.S. territories, if you were born abroad to parents who are U.S. citizens, or if you have obtained citizenship status through naturalization. If you were born in American Samoa or Swains Island, then you are a U.S. national.

OR



**Have a GREEN
CARD**

You are eligible if you have a Form I-551, I-151, or I-551C, also known as a green card, showing you are a U.S. permanent resident.

OR



**Have an ARRIVAL-
DEPARTURE
RECORD**

Your Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services must show one of the following:

- Refugee
- Asylum Granted
- Cuban-Haitian Entrant (Status Pending)
- Conditional Entrant (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
- Parolee

OR



**Have BATTERED
IMMIGRANT
STATUS**

You are designated as a "battered immigrant-qualified alien" if you are a victim of abuse by your citizen or permanent resident spouse, or you are the child of a person designated as such under the Violence Against Women Act.

OR



**Have a
T-VISA**

You are eligible if you have a T-visa or a parent with a T-1 visa.

Determining Status - DON'T...

- DON'T assume any student is undocumented based on their background, language, or a sibling's status; there are undocumented students from all over the world and mixed status families (ie some DACA, some citizen siblings) are common
- DON'T assume that because a student is a citizen that their parents are also citizens
- DON'T keep a list of student information; schools are not allowed to request or maintain lists or files of student statuses
- DON'T give students immigration advice - you are not qualified.
- DON'T assume students know their status or understand its implications/ timeline (for those not US born)

Why A Student Reveals

- The student has identified a racial, cultural, or other affinity that you both share.
- You've built trust with them, they think you will be understanding/accepting.
- They cannot complete the class/application/internship/etc without telling you of their inability to comply with the requirements due to their situation.
- You are in a position to assist them with a concern, provide them information or access to certain resources.
- Another student told them you were the right person to talk to.

Whatever the reason, honor the enormous trust they have just shown you.

When A Student Reveals

“When a student comes out to you, they share information about their immigration status with you with the keen awareness of the risks involved: the risk of jeopardizing their relationship with you, the risk of being rejected, and the risk of being denied success in your class or program. Unless you have given some indication of your feelings or beliefs about the undocumented, they may have no way of knowing in advance whether your reaction will be positive or negative.”

- thedream.us - Undocu Ally Training

Your Reaction is CRITICAL

DON'T SAY THIS:

- So you're illegal/you don't have papers?
- How did you get here?
- I need you to explain everything about your immigration status.
- That's horrible/that sucks/I'm sorry
- Everything is going to be fine, don't worry
- I'm going to have to tell your teacher, counselor, etc.

SAY THIS:

Thank you for trusting me with this information, I appreciate you confiding in me.

I want to protect your privacy, do you feel comfortable telling me who else knows or who you don't want me to tell?

How can I best support you? It's okay if you don't know yet. I may not have the answers to this, is it okay if I ask someone to help me figure it out?

Do you have ideas for how we can work on this together or would you like me to brainstorm first?

We could really use the help of your teacher, counselor, etc - would you consider sharing with them? What would make you most comfortable?

I'm really proud of you for advocating for yourself.



Determining Status - Do

- Honor students' trust and vulnerability if they share their DACA or undocumented status with you. It is called "coming out" and is viewed as importantly as "coming out" is for many LGBTQ students
- Encourage students to access local support groups like TIRRC's JUMP group and for DACA students, JFON's free legal services (at Casa Azafrán)
- Encourage older students and families to follow reliable information sources (TIRRC locally, United We Dream nationally) and ask them how they are learning about issues, particularly pertaining to DACA
- Follow these same sources yourself so that you are informed about current events and news pertaining to key immigration issues and can help explain/ interpret the news (national regarding DACA or local regarding state bills)
- Be honest with students that not being a citizen **does** make pathways to college and career more complicated

Asking Students About Their Status

Technically, schools may not inquire about immigration status. K-12 education is a guaranteed right under *Plyer v. Doe*

- Think about this carefully, **context and relationship are key.**
- Be prepared for their response, positive or negative you've taken the step to open this door. Take responsibility for intent vs impact.
- Don't store this information IN ANY OFFICIAL CAPACITY. BE CAREFUL with whatever you write, email, or print.
- Have resources available if necessary
- Never do this in a public place
- All students are different, try to match a students response. If they're cool, be cool.



Asking Students About Their Status

This might be a little uncomfortable but I'd like to ask you a personal question so I can give you the best and most accurate information. I want you to know that you can trust me with your answer and that no matter what, I will do my best to help you. I won't share your answers with anyone unless you give me permission.

- Do you understand what it means to be a citizen or resident? Do you know if you're a citizen or resident of the U.S.?
- Were you born here in the U.S.? Were your parents born here?
- Sometimes people talk about this by saying that "they have papers," do you know if this applies to you or your family?
- To be able to receive financial aid through FAFSA/TN Promise, etc, you need to be US citizen, resident, or have a specific immigration status. Could you share your status with me?
- Do you know if you have a social security number? Do you have DACA?



Responding to Students:

- Thank you for your honesty and vulnerability.
- I'm sorry if that was hard to talk about, it's okay to feel emotional right now.
- I'm glad we had this conversation.
- This will change some of our plans about the college application process, but it's still possible. We're here to help.
- I appreciate you sharing. If you know someone that this might apply to, let them know they're welcome to reach out to me or [insert person here, like a counselor].



Final Thoughts

All of this is really complicated and changes often

You don't have to be an expert, but you have to stay informed

Only a lawyer should give advice regarding immigration policies, eligibility for status changes, etc.

Remember to consider students' mental health and wellbeing.

Refer to seek trustworthy organizations for your questions or to help students.

What have you learned?

- What is something new you've learned or knowledge you've confirmed?
- If you had to share about this with a colleague who wasn't here, what would you say to them?



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COLLEGE & CAREER PROGRAM



ESCALERA GRADS
COLLEGE SUCCESS



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GEAR UP
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Our Education Programs

ESCALERA



COLLEGE & CAREER PROGRAM

College Access Programs

- The Escalera Program serves high school juniors and seniors of **any** ethnic or racial background who will be first-generation college students
- Goal: increasing postsecondary education attainment through enrollment, career and workforce development planning, and information about professional careers
 - Bi-weekly after school curriculum program
 - 1:1 coaching and case management
 - College Tours, Field Trips, and Special Activities
- Currently only in MNPS
 - Overton HS, Cane Ridge HS, Glencliff HS



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College Access Programs



- The collaboration between Conexión Américas and GEAR UP provides services to students and families with the aim of increasing enrollment and success in postsecondary education.
- Supporting high school Latino students specifically through GEAR UP at Antioch, Cane Ridge, Overton & Glencliff High Schools.
- Includes Student as Professional working days and panels with career professionals

College Success Program



- Committed to providing accurate and timely information and resources to support students' higher education aspirations regardless of their documentation status.
- Created to continue supporting our students post enrollment toward credentialing and completion
- Serves first-generation college students regardless of racial or ethnic background who completed affiliated Escalera Program in high school

College Success Program



- Offering 1:1 meeting for mentoring and advising
- Students enrolled at Nashville State Community College, MTSU, Lipscomb, Trevecca, Belmont, and Austin Peay, and some out of state who receive support virtually.

College Success Program



- Currently serving 103 students including our recent 2023 graduated class
- Students enrolled at Nashville State Community College, MTSU, Lipscomb, Trevecca, Belmont, and Austin Peay, and some out of state who receive support virtually.
- Programming includes financial aid advising, choosing programs of study, validating accreditation on institutions, gap years and re-enrollment, and general college access questions

College Access - How to Refer Students

- **GEAR UP:** High school Latino students through GEAR UP at Antioch, Cane Ridge, Overton & Glencliff High Schools.
 - Email Teresa Alberto at teresa@conexionamericas.org.
- **Escalera:** College Access after school program & case management for juniors and seniors at Cane Ridge, Overton & Glencliff HS
 - Kelly Howard- Cane Ridge (kelly@conexionamericas.org)
 - Ashly Lepez - Glencliff (ashly@conexionamericas.org)
 - Iris Reyes - Overton (iris@conexionamericas.org)
- **Latino Advising connecting:** Learn about supporting students pre and post enrollment from our expert, Elizabeth!
 - Elizabeth Narváez-Vega (elizabethnv@conexionamericas.org)



Student Supports - A Note

- We also provide services through a Youth Development Specialist at Overton HS that works with EL/recent arrival students to welcome, onboard, and provide case management support throughout the year. This is a contracted 11-month position. Interested schools who would like a similar resource can email our Director of Programs at maria@conexionamericas.org.
- Our Escalera program is run by a full-time staff member. If a school is interested in being an Escalera site, it would require a contracted position. Email maria@conexionamericas.org if you'd like to explore this option.



Thank You!

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