FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
DACA and Your Workplace Rights

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Many of the questions NILC has been asked about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program have to do with the rights of workers (1) when they apply for DACA, (2) after they have received DACA and have a work permit, and (3) when they are applying to renew their DACA. This FAQ is intended to answer those questions and to provide information that may be helpful when you apply for and after you’ve been granted DACA.

If you’ve already been granted DACA, received your employment authorization document (EAD), and have urgent questions about your current job, see “Maintaining your current job,” pp. 8–10. If you’re interested specifically in the process of applying to renew your DACA, see “The DACA renewal process,” pp. 10–12.

This FAQ does not replace the advice of a qualified lawyer. You should contact a lawyer if you have questions about your particular situation. NILC staff are also available to provide more information on the topics discussed below, but we’re not available to give you legal advice or represent you in court.

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Background: The DACA program

On June 15, 2012, President Barack Obama announced that, under a policy called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would no longer deport certain undocumented young people. DACA has two important parts:

• PART 1: Under DACA, DHS will not deport certain undocumented people and will give them temporary permission to stay in the United States. This temporary permission to stay in the U.S. is called “deferred action.”
• PART 2: People who are granted deferred action through DACA will be eligible for an EAD, or “work permit,” that is valid for two years and that they can apply to renew
every two years. In other words, they can work “with papers.” (NOTE: Though people often refer to the employment authorization document, or EAD, as a “work permit,” in this FAQ it will always be called “EAD.”

On November 20, 2014, President Obama announced several changes to immigration policies. One of these changes was that the DACA program was being expanded to cover people who (a) entered the U.S. before their sixteenth birthday and (b) have lived continuously in the U.S. since January 1, 2010. People who were “aged out” of the original DACA program because they were older than age 30 on June 15, 2012, would be eligible to apply, regardless of their current age. In addition, under the expanded DACA program, deferred action and the EAD would be granted for a period of three years, and DACA recipients would be able to apply to renew their DACA and EADs every three years.  

However, this “expanded DACA” initiative that President Obama announced on Nov. 20, 2014, has been temporarily blocked by a federal district court in Texas as a result of a lawsuit filed by Texas and 25 other states — Texas, et al. v. United States, et al. The lawsuit is a legal challenge to President Obama’s expansion of the DACA program and to another initiative he announced at the same time, Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). The federal court’s order that has blocked DAPA and expanded DACA from being implemented did not affect the original DACA program (the one announced on June 15, 2012), however. It remains in effect.

Do you want to see if you may be eligible for DACA? Check out NILC’s Frequently Asked Questions for basic information about whether you may be eligible. You may also use the online “Requesting Deferred Action” tool that’s available on the Own the Dream / Únete al Sueño website to see if you might qualify.

If you want more detailed information about the expanded DACA program, see NILC’s answers to frequently asked questions about the DAPA program and the expanded DACA program.

If you want more general information about how to renew your DACA and EAD, see NILC’s answers to frequently asked questions on the DACA renewal process. You can also learn more by going to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ (USCIS’s) “Renew Your DACA” webpage.

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1 The changes announced by President Obama include the creation of the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) program, which will allow certain undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to apply for deferred action and work authorization. The president also announced several immigration enforcement reforms. For more information about these changes and the president’s announcement more generally, see www.nilc.org/immigration-reform-and-executive-actions/.

2 Under the original DACA program, deferred action and employment authorization were granted for renewable two-year periods.

3 Frequently Asked Questions: www.nilc.org/faqdeferredactionyouth/.


5 See www.nilc.org/dapa-and-expanded-daca-programs/. When the administration first announced the DAPA program, it referred to the program as “Deferred Action for Parental Accountability.” However, the administration now refers to the program as “Deferred Action for Parents of Americans.”

6 www.nilc.org/dacarenewalprocess/.

Employment records and applying for DACA

■ Should I include any documents from my work, such as pay stubs, as part of my DACA application?

It depends. You are not required to supply any employment records (such as pay stubs) as part of your DACA application. And for most applicants, there is no reason to include them. General ly, if you can prove that you have been in the U.S. without using pay stubs, you should.

However, that may be difficult in some cases. As part of your application, you must prove that you have been in the U.S. continuously since June 15, 2007, and that any departures from the U.S. during this period were brief, casual, and for innocent reasons. Some workers may have difficulty proving that they have lived in the U.S. continuously since June 15, 2007. For example, farm workers or other workers who live in temporary or employer-provided housing may not have many other records to show that they have lived in the U.S. continuously since that date.

There are many kinds of documents you can use to prove that you have lived continuously in the U.S. since June 15, 2007. You can use utility bills, phone bills, school records, doctor’s records, hospital bills, or even receipts of remittances (remesas or envíos) sent to relatives or friends in your home country through the years. If you have saved copies of your work schedules through the years, you might be able to use them. You do not need to have documents for every month of this period, but lengthy gaps of time for which you have no documents may be a problem.

You can also use two or more affidavits, or declarations, to prove that you were in the U.S. for any lengthy period of time for which you don’t have any other evidence. An affidavit is a written statement, signed under penalty of perjury, from someone who has personal knowledge of your presence in the U.S. If, for any part of the required period of continuous presence, you do not have good evidence to show that you were in the U.S., you can submit at least two affidavits from people who can verify that you were in the U.S. during that time. You may also use affidavits to prove that a departure from the U.S. was brief, casual, and innocent.

However, some people only have employment records to prove that they have been living in the U.S. continuously. If that is true for you, you may want to use proof from your work to show that you have been in the U.S. continuously. If your pay stubs or other work documents contain a Social Security number or name that is not yours, talk to an attorney before submitting these documents as part of your application.

■ Should I tell my supervisor or coworkers my immigration status? Or that I’m applying for DACA?

Your immigration status is personal, private information, and generally you should not share this with anyone other than your attorney. You especially should not tell your employer or anyone at your job that you are applying for DACA. If you do, you may risk being fired.

You are not required to tell your employer that you are applying for DACA.

You are not required to tell anyone at your job — including line supervisors, managers, human resources staff, or crew leaders — that you are applying for DACA.
Your boss or supervisor should not ask you if you are applying for deferred action. If they do, you should tell them you are not comfortable answering that question. Your employer should not try to force you to answer. NILC is happy to strategize with you about how to protect your rights in such situations.

Under immigration law, employers have a responsibility to make sure that they do not employ unauthorized workers. If an employer learns that you are ineligible to work in the U.S., the employer has an obligation to fire you. If you tell your employer that you are applying for DACA, the employer will probably think that you are not eligible to work legally in the U.S. Even though you will be eligible to work legally once you receive deferred action and an EAD, you would be telling the employer that you are currently ineligible. Because of this, the employer might feel the need to fire you in order to avoid violating immigration law.

This can be a hard situation, especially if you have a friendly relationship with your boss. If you and your employer are good friends, you might feel tempted to tell him or her that you are applying for DACA. However, if you share this information, you risk losing your job.

Should I ask my boss for documents that help prove that I have lived continuously in the U.S. for the past five years?

Generally, if you can prove that you have been in the U.S. without using employment documents, you should. If you are going to ask your employer for a letter confirming your employment, you have to be very careful about how you ask. You need to ask in a way that does not alert your employer to your immigration status. If you tell your employer that you are applying for DACA or otherwise give the employer information about your immigration status, you may be fired.

If you must get information from your employer:

- Do not tell your employer that you are applying for DACA.
- Do not mention that your request for information is for immigration purposes.
- Request a letter or other documents that confirm the dates that you have been employed at the job.
- If your employer asks why you are making this request, answer that you would rather not say why and that it relates to a private matter.

Social Security number and the EAD

Should I list my Social Security number (SSN) on the DACA request form (Form I-821D) or on the application for employment authorization (Forms I-765 and I-765WS)?

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has said that you should list only an SSN that was properly issued to you by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Do not list an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) — or any other SSNs that you may have used — on your DACA or employment authorization application forms.
How long is the wait for processing? When do I get my employment authorization document?

Soon after your DACA request is approved, you will receive your EAD in the mail. We recommend you mark on a calendar the date your EAD expires and, on the calendar, count backwards 150 days from that day to know when to submit your application to renew your DACA and EAD. (For more information about renewing your DACA, see “The DACA renewal process,” pp. 10–12, below.)

What is an EAD, exactly?

An EAD is an employment authorization document (also known as a work permit or I-766) that tells your employer you are authorized to work in the U.S. It can also be used as an ID.

As part of applying for DACA, you will apply for an EAD using Forms I-765 and I-765WS. After the government approves your application, you will be issued an EAD card that looks similar to the photo at right.

An EAD is not the same thing as a passport or a Social Security card. This document establishes only that you may work legally in the U.S.

Do I need to apply for a Social Security number now? If so, how do I apply?

If you receive deferred action and an EAD from the government, you can apply for a Social Security number from the Social Security Administration. You must visit an SSA office in person to apply for an SSN, bring your EAD, and also prove your age and identity. There are SSA offices across the country. For more information, see SSA’s publication “Social Security Number—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.”

If you have been issued an EAD, you may work legally even if you don’t apply for an SSN. The EAD by itself proves that you can work legally. However, it is usually a good idea to apply for an SSN. An SSN:

- Can help you obtain a state ID card.
- Can make it possible for an employer to do a background check on you, which may be necessary for certain jobs.
- Can be an alternate form of ID.
- Can make it easier to apply for loans.
- Can make it easier to rent an apartment.
- Makes it possible to properly complete a W-4 federal tax withholding form.

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https://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/deferred_action.pdf
The hiring process and beginning employment

- If I have received my employment authorization document, may I apply for jobs?
  
  Yes. After you are hired by an employer, but within the first three days of work, the employer should ask you to complete an I-9 employment eligibility verification form and to present documents that prove you are eligible to work legally in the U.S. At that time, you can present your EAD. Your employer might make a copy of your EAD.

- When I interview for a job, do I need to tell the person interviewing me that I received deferred action or how I received an EAD?
  
  No. You do not need to tell your employer that you received an EAD through the DACA program, and the employer should not ask.

- What is an I-9 form?
  
  Under U.S. law, employers have an obligation to hire only people who have valid work authorization. Employers use the I-9 form to document that an employee is authorized to work in the U.S.

  Therefore, after you are hired, your employer must verify your identity and authorization to work legally in the U.S. To prove your identity and employment authorization, you must present either one document that shows both your identity and employment authorization (also called a “List A” document), or you must present a combination of documents, one that proves your identity (that you are who you say you are; also called a “List B” document) and another that proves you are work-authorized (eligible to work legally in the U.S.; also called a “List C” document). The lists of acceptable documents — Lists A, B, and C — are available on USCIS’s website.  

  Your employer must check your identity and employment authorization documents and complete an I-9 form. Your employer will then ask you to fill out and sign the I-9 form. Employers keep all I-9 forms in their files. Your employer must show the completed forms to enforcement officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security if asked for them.

  Since the EAD is a “List A” document, it proves both your identity and work authorization. Therefore, when you fill out the I-9 form, if you show your employer your EAD, you don’t have to show the employer any other documents. In a special Guidance for Employers about DACA, USCIS says that, when an employer gives an employee the I-9 form to fill out and the employee presents his or her EAD, the employer should not ask for any additional proof that the employee is authorized to work.

  Sometimes employers don’t do what they’re supposed to under the law — they don’t ask workers to complete an I-9 form or show identity and employment authorization documents. It is the employer’s responsibility to make sure that the I-9 process is completed. If your employer does not ask you to complete an I-9 form and show your document(s), you have no responsibility to do either.

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Do you have questions about completing the I-9 form? See NILC’s **Proving Work Authorization & Reverification** and the resources available from our “I-9 Antidiscrimination Protections” webpage for more information. Sometimes employers use an online system called E-Verify instead of a paper I-9 form. For information about your rights when an employer uses E-Verify, see the resources available from our E-Verify > Materials for Workers webpage.

**What is a W-4?**

The W-4 form is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) document that an employer must have you complete shortly after you are hired. The W-4 is important for two reasons: First, it allows the government to determine the correct amount of taxes that should be withheld from your paycheck. Second, it helps the government know how long you have been working and how much you have contributed to the Social Security Trust Fund (SSTF). When the government withholds money from your paycheck, part of it is put into the SSTF. In the future, if you become a lawful permanent resident or citizen of the U.S., you may be able to get credit for the amount of money you contributed to the SSTF. This can help you when you retire or become disabled.

After you complete a W-4, your employer keeps it on file. Your employer will use the information from the W-4 to create a W-2 form for you. You use the W-2 form to complete your income tax return, if you are required to file one. Your employer should send you a W-2 form before January 31 of each year. The employer will also send some of the information from the W-2 for to the SSA and the IRS. The W-4 and W-2 forms are not immigration documents.

**Can I now join a union?**

Authorized and unauthorized workers can join a union or become members of a workers’ center. Across the country, workers are standing up together to demand their rights in the workplace. If you are interested in joining a union, supporting a campaign for working people, or finding a local workers’ center, you can do so whether or not your DACA application is approved.

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**Maintaining your current job**

**May my current employer keep employing me after I receive my employment authorization document?**

Yes. Once you have your EAD, your employer can keep you on the job without violating immigration law. In fact, if your employer fires you, that could be a violation of the

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12 www.nilc.org/materialsiev/.
13 www.unionplus.org/about/labor-unions/how-to-join.
Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII) (more information about this is provided below).

■ May my employer check my new EAD? Should I show the EAD to my employer?

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will not alert your employer that you have received an EAD. So if you do not tell your employer that you have received an EAD, it is unlikely that the employer will know you have one. Once you receive your EAD, you do not have an obligation to show this document to your employer.

If you do show your EAD to your employer and the name and birth date on the EAD are different from the name and birth date on the I-9 form your employer has on file for you, the employer is required to have you fill out a new I-9 form. Your employer is also required to have you complete a new I-9 form if your old I-9 form contains a Social Security number that is different from your new Social Security number. And your employer is required to have you complete a new I-9 form if, in the “attestation” portion of Section 1 of your old form, you check-marked an immigration or citizenship status or provided an “alien number” that doesn’t match the status or alien number that’s indicated on your EAD16 (for example, if your old I-9 form has a checkmark next to “A citizen of the United States”).

For more information about issues related to presenting your new EAD to your employer, see “I told my employer that I now have an EAD or a new Social Security number. The employer fired me. What are my rights?,” on page 9, below.

Typically, once you are hired and have completed the I-9 or E-Verify process, your employer should not ask to see your EAD or any other identity or employment eligibility verification document again until the time a document you provided expires. When an employer asks to see a document again, this is called reverification. Your employer may reverify your employment eligibility only under certain circumstances. Your employer may reverify your employment eligibility — and ask to see your document again — if the document is about to expire or already has expired. (For more information about the reverification process in the DACA context, see “The DACA renewal process,” pp. 10–12, below.) But if your employer singles you or a certain group of workers out for reverification without having some legitimate reason — such as the expiration of your document — the employer may be engaging in illegal reverification.

If your employer asks to see some workers’ documents but not others’, the employer may be discriminating on the basis of their citizenship or immigration status or their national origin. Under immigration law, such discrimination is illegal. If employers reverify workers, they must treat the workers the same regardless of their citizenship or immigration status or of their national origin. If the employer treats workers differently, such as by reverifying some of them but not others, the employer’s action could be illegal.

If this occurs in your workplace, you can contact the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices (1-800-255-7688 or www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc/). Also feel free to contact NILC for more information about these issues.

The law with respect to what employers may or may not do when reverifying employees’ identity and work authorization is complex. For example, your employer might violate labor law — the National Labor Relations Act — if the employer reverifies everyone in the workforce during a labor dispute (a labor dispute is a disagreement between an employer and workers about work-related issues). Or your employer might violate another antidiscrimination law — Title VII — if the employer reverifies workers based on their race or ethnicity. If you want to learn more about workplace reverification, see NILC’s Reverification of Employment Eligibility: Frequently Asked Questions. 17

Should I correct information on my W-4 form?

It is important that all the information on your W-4 form be correct. It helps the government know how long you have been working and ensures that your contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund are recorded. This can help you when you retire or become disabled. If you would like information about how to correct your Social Security earnings record or want to discuss whether you should correct the information on your W-4, please contact NILC.

I told my employer that I now have an EAD or a new Social Security number. The employer fired me. What are my rights?

It depends. Your rights may be different depending on several things, including whether or not you gave your employer false documents or false information when you were first hired.

If you did not complete an I-9 form and did not provide false information when you were first hired, your employer may not fire you just because you now present an EAD. Nor may your employer fire you because of where you were born, where you come from, or your native language or accent. If you show your employer an EAD, your employer may not discriminate against you on the basis of your not being a U.S. citizen. Employers who do so may be violating the antidiscrimination provisions of immigration law or Title VII. Depending on the facts of your case and the laws broken by your employer, you may have the right to reinstatement (the right to return to the job) and to damages (money to compensate for harm you have suffered).

But the situation will be different if you completed an I-9 form when you were first hired. For example, if your employer discovers that you lied and presented false documents at the time you were hired, the employer may be able to fire you legally. 18 If the employer’s policy is to fire anybody who is dishonest in the workplace and the employer has enforced the rule consistently for all workers, it may be legal for the employer to fire you for lying and presenting false documents. Therefore, you should think carefully about whether to disclose to your employer the fact that you now have an EAD or a new SSN. If you have questions,


18 A state law in California—Assembly Bill 263—that went into effect on January 1, 2014, prohibits an employer from taking negative action against an employee for updating his or her employment records. So workers in California who correct their I-9 form may have additional legal protections. For more information about AB 263, see the National Employment Law Project’s publication “California’s New Worker Protections Against Retaliation,” www.nelp.org/page/-/Justice/2013/ca-worker-protections-against-retaliation.pdf.
feel free to contact NILC or the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices (1-800-255-7688 or www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc/).

In addition, if you belong to a labor union, you will likely have additional rights.

■ If I belong to a labor union, can they help?

Yes. If you belong to a union, your union representative should be able to help you navigate some of the issues discussed above, including any rights you have under your collective bargaining agreement. You should contact your union representative with any questions that you have.

The DACA renewal process

■ What should my employer do when my EAD expires?

Under federal law, your employer is required to reverify your employment authorization no later than the date that your EAD expires. It is likely that your employer will ask you for proof that your employment authorization has been renewed and will ask you to complete section 3 of the I-9 form to show that you presented an EAD with a new expiration date.

If, on the date your EAD expires, you cannot present proof that you have employment authorization, your employer may fire you. If your EAD has expired and you have not yet received a new EAD, you are not obligated to go tell your employer that this has happened, but you will be at risk of being fired when your employer realizes that your EAD has expired.

Some employers have offered employees who are waiting for their DACA and EAD to be renewed a temporary termination of employment and the right to be rehired if their renewal is approved within a reasonable period of time.

■ When should I begin the process to renew my DACA?

We recommend that you submit your renewal application about 150 days, but no later than 120 days, before your current EAD expires (which is the same date that your DACA expires). It is better to apply closer to 150 than 120 days before your DACA’s expiration date in order to give USCIS as much time as possible to review your application. If you submit your renewal application more than 150 days (5 months) before your DACA and EAD expire, USCIS will accept your application, but filing early could result in your DACA and EAD renewal date being earlier than your initial DACA’s expiration date. This, in turn, would mean that your two-year renewal period would expire sooner than it would if you did not submit an early application for renewal. Here’s an example of how that would work:

EXAMPLE: Your DACA’s expiration date is in December 2015. You decide to apply in July 2015 for renewal. USCIS will accept your early application for processing, but if your application is approved and your DACA is renewed for a period of two years, that period will begin on the date USCIS approves the application. So if USCIS approves your renewal application in September 2015, your DACA renewal period will be from September 2015 through September 2017, not from December 2015 through December 2017.
In light of this, you will have to decide if it makes sense for you to submit your DACA renewal application more than 150 days before your current DACA’s expiration date. USCIS says it will be able to make final decisions on most renewal applications within 120 days of the time they are submitted. But USCIS will not issue you an interim EAD and DACA if the processing of your renewal application is delayed beyond the date that your current EAD and DACA expire.

So it is very important that you submit your application for renewal about 150 days (or more, if you so choose) and no later than 120 days before your EAD’s expiration date. Your ability to continue working legally depends on it. This online calculator can help you decide when would be the best time to submit your DACA renewal application to USCIS.19

What happens if my EAD expires before my DACA renewal application is approved?

USCIS will not issue you an interim EAD and DACA, regardless of when you filed your application to renew DACA. USCIS will renew your EAD and DACA only after it has reviewed and approved your renewal application. In other words, if your EAD and DACA expire while USCIS is still processing your application, you will lose your DACA and employment authorization until USCIS makes a decision on your application.

If that happens, you will no longer be lawfully present in the U.S., and you will begin accruing “unlawful presence,” unless you were under age 18 at the time you submitted your renewal application. It is also possible that your employer will fire you, since you will no longer have legal authorization to work. In this situation, you may be able to negotiate with your employer to terminate your employment temporarily until your DACA and EAD renewals are approved. Your employer could then give you your job back when you receive your new EAD. However, your employer is not obligated to do this.

Since the consequences of losing your DACA and employment authorization for even a brief period of time could be very serious, it is very important that you submit your DACA renewal application about 150 days and no later than 120 days before your EAD expires.

If I am currently employed, can my employer legally allow me to keep working after my EAD expires?

No. It is a violation of federal law for an employer to continue to employ you after your work authorization expires. Therefore, you run a high risk of being fired from your job if your DACA and employment authorization are not renewed before the expiration date on the EAD that you got when you first received DACA.

Do I have to submit evidence of employment as part of the renewal process?

No. To be eligible for DACA renewal, you do not need to be currently working, and you do not need to submit evidence of employment as part of your renewal application.

19 www.nilc.org/dacarenewalcalculator/.
IF YOU WANT more general information about how to renew your DACA and EAD, see NILC’s answers to frequently asked questions on the DACA renewal process. You can also learn more by going to USCIS’s “Renew Your DACA” webpage.

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**Abbreviations used in this FAQ**

DACA  Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals  
DAPA  Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (previously known as Deferred Action for Parental Accountability)  
DHS  U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
EAD  Employment authorization document, or work permit  
FAQ  Document that lists and answers frequently asked questions  
ID  Identification, or identification document  
INA  Immigration and Nationality Act  
IRS  Internal Revenue Service  
ITIN  Individual Taxpayer Identification Number  
NILC  National Immigration Law Center  
SSA  Social Security Administration  
SSN  Social Security number  
SSTF  Social Security Trust Fund  
Title VII  Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964  
USCIS  U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT**  
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