



# THE POWER OF DACA

---

Guillermo Cantor, PhD



# Purpose of the presentation

- Overview of what we know about DACA and its impact

# Background on DACA

- Initiative adopted by Obama administration in 2012 that provides temporary relief from deportation and work authorization to eligible unauthorized immigrants who entered the country at a young age.
- Since the initiative was announced, USCIS has approved:
  - over 770,000 initial applications
  - over 690,000 applications for renewal

# Research- 3 phases

- Demographics/ Characteristics of the DACA applicant pool
  - Where applications were filed, where DACA eligible population live
  - Barriers to access
  - Role of Consulates, NGOs, legal service providers
  - DACA screening and other forms of relief
  - Local contexts
- Impact of the program
  - How it changed recipients' lives (jobs, earnings, education, etc.)
- Barriers to full socioeconomic integration

# IMPACT

- DACA recipients experienced a marked increase in opportunities for economic and social incorporation
- According to NURP survey:
  - Many have obtained new jobs and internships and have increased their earnings.
  - Some have also opened bank accounts and obtained credit cards.
  - All states now permit DACA beneficiaries to obtain driver's licenses, and many beneficiaries have done so.

# IMPACT (cont.)

- Tom Wong: Most recent survey, fielded in 2016 (n=1,308).
- Employment
  - 87 percent of respondents are currently employed, with an additional 8 percent not working but in school.
    - 21 percent of respondents work in educational and health services,
    - 11 percent in the nonprofit sector,
    - 9 percent in wholesale and retail trades, and
    - 8 percent work in professional and business services.

# IMPACT (cont)

- **Mobility:** After receiving DACA,
  - 63 percent of respondents reported moving to a job with better pay;
  - 49 percent moved to a job that “better fits my education and training”; and
  - 48 percent moved to a job with better working conditions. I.
  - 6 percent of respondents started their own business
- **Earnings**
  - The average hourly wages of respondents increased by 42 percent since receiving DACA, rising from \$9.83 per hour to \$13.96 per hour.

# IMPACT ON EDUCATION

- Overall, 46 percent of respondents are currently in school
  - 4 percent are pursuing a high school or GED diploma.
  - 20 percent are pursuing an associate degree.
  - 4 percent are pursuing a trade, technical, or vocational certificate.
  - 70 percent are pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher.



# Alternatives to 4-year college

- Job-training programs in the trades at community colleges and even at local community-based organizations.
  - lower tuition costs
  - flexible class schedules (allowed students to work while pursuing their degrees).
  - non-residential programs also allowed them to live at home and to save money for tuition

# Barriers

- **Financial aid and in-state tuition**
- Where one resides within the United States dramatically shapes a multitude of experiences based on local impediments and opportunities.
- Lack of access to financial aid and in-state tuition in many states:
  - block many DACA beneficiaries from enrolling in college and completing their degrees.
  - work long hours
  - decrease ability to attend school continuously or full-time
  - affect ability to perform well in school

# Barriers (cont.)

## Licensing

- Many obtained training for specialized vocations that require a professional license in order to gain employment.
- Today, nearly 30 percent of all jobs require a license.
- License requirements vary from state to state
- At least 190 occupations require state licenses in some states, and 93 occupations are licensed in all states.
- In some states, state-issued licenses are restricted to citizens and legal permanent residents.
- Many DACA beneficiaries are prevented from working in the occupations for which they are educated.

## Barriers (cont.)

- **Access to information**
- Many teachers and counselors did not fully understand the legal landscape their students were required to navigate
- This state-level variation makes it extremely important that school counselors, teachers, and other academic advisors are aware of the opportunities and restrictions available to DACAmented youth in their state.

# Most important barrier

- Uncertainty about the future
- Lack of minimum standards of predictability, difficult to make plans.