

## Pursuing Nursing: Q&A for Undocumented Students in California

### Can I attend a nursing program in California without a Social Security Number (SSN)?

Yes, it is possible. In CA, legislation prevents medical degree programs such as nursing from denying a student who meets admission requirements based on their immigration status (see "What is CA Senate Bill (SB) 1139?"). Students under the following immigration categories are protected from discrimination when applying to nursing programs in California:

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Temporary Protective Status (TPS)
- Undocumented individuals without employment authorization or SSN who DO HAVE an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN); this includes individuals with a pending asylum case, U-Visas, T-Visas, or other "in-between" statuses.
- Students with T or U visas

### What is CA Senate Bill (SB) 1139?

CA Senate Bill (SB) 1139 (Lara, 2016) is a law that was signed which:

- Prohibits medical degree programs like nursing from denying admission to students based on their citizenship or immigration status. This includes:
  - A person without lawful immigration status and/or,
  - A person who is exempt from nonresident tuition (meets AB 540, AB 2000, or SB 68 requirements) and
  - Who meets the criteria for admission to a medical degree program at any public or private postsecondary educational institution that offers such a program.
- This bill has opened the doors for many students under the following immigration categories:
  - Undocumented individuals without employment authorization or SSN who have an ITIN
  - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
  - Temporary Protective Status (TPS)

SB 1139 also grants access to existing state funding to invest in their education. It makes state loan repayment and scholarships available to undocumented individuals; students are encouraged to contact their financial aid office to learn about state and institutional aid eligibility.

### As an undocumented student, can I get financial aid to cover enrollment fees for an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) or tuition for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at a public institution?

Yes! Students who meet AB540, AB2000, **OR** SB68 requirements, submit a California Dream Act Application (CADAA) during the application timeline, **AND** meet GPA and income requirements, can qualify for Cal Grant tuition assistance at the CCC, CSU, or UC for undergraduate ADN and BSN programs. For more information about Cal Grant programs and application deadlines, visit <https://www.csac.ca.gov/undocumented-dreamer-students>.

For more information about AB 540, AB 2000, or SB 68 and eligibility, visit <https://www2.calstate.edu/attend/student-services/resources-for-undocumented-students/Pages/about-ab-540-and-the-california-dream-act.aspx>.

Please note that students do not qualify for Cal Grants at the graduate and professional level. However, campuses may use the CADDA or an in-house financial aid application to determine students' need for financial assistance. Students are encouraged to speak with a financial aid representative at their prospective school at least a year before applying to school to learn about their process.

Students planning to attend a private institution are encouraged to speak with the financial aid office at their future campus to receive information on the school's process regarding state and institutional aid. We encourage students to initiate these conversations at least a year in advance.

## **Pursuing Nursing: Q&A for Undocumented Students in California (continued)**

### **Is it possible to complete my clinical without an SSN or Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in California?**

Clinical training can be made available to individuals without a social security number since they are "non-paid" and are not processed through standard payroll procedures.

- An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) may help conduct a background check. However, certain companies that run background checks will not require a specific number and will have the applicant enter 000-00-0000 or 111-11-1111 (varies by company) if they do not have an SSN.
- Nursing programs are encouraged to create partnerships with clinical sites that do not require an SSN for the background check.
- Programs are encouraged to advocate at clinical sites that require an SSN from undocumented students.
- A student's clinical completion can be delayed if nursing programs do not partner with clinical sites to accommodate a student without an SSN.
- Additionally, it can create a stressful environment for the student trying to self-advocate to complete the program due to these barriers.

### **Can I get a background check without a Social Security Number (SSN) or Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?**

- Yes, students DO NOT need an SSN or EAD to get a background check;
- Criminal background checks do not require an SSN;
  - Name, date of birth, and address can be used to run a background check.
  - Fingerprints may also be used for background checks.
- Every agency that runs background checks has its application process. Individuals are encouraged to speak with the nursing program, the clinical site, and the company running the background check for further instructions and procedures when completing the necessary forms.
- Hospitals and clinics where students complete their hours are encouraged to accommodate and accept non-SSN background checks. A site may not be aware of this process; schools are encouraged to advocate and inform the sites.

### **Can I get a professional license without an SSN or EAD?**

California: SB 1159 (2014) offers professional licenses to anyone who completes the necessary training and other state licensing requirements regardless of immigration status.

Thanks to Senate Bill (SB) 1159 (2014), California allows immigrants without SSN and EAD to receive professional licenses if they meet all other requirements. Applicants without an SSN must provide an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) when seeking a license.

Additionally, the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) will accept an ITIN to apply for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) if the applicant does not have an SSN.

### **Can I get employment as a nurse without an SSN and EAD?**

- SB 1159 and SB 1139 do not provide employment authorization.
- Without an SSN and EAD, individuals are not able to be an employee. However, individuals without employment authorization can become sole proprietors and start their own business as health professionals.
- Besides being a regular employee, other income-generating options exist, such as freelance work, independent contracting, and entrepreneurship.

### **Undocumented individuals without an SSN can complete a background check, take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) if they have an ITIN, and get their professional license in CA.**

Campus directors and coordinators are encouraged to initiate these conversations with their site partners so that together they can better serve and create an equitable program for undocumented students.

Please contact [yadi@phdreamers.org](mailto:yadi@phdreamers.org) or [angeles@phdreamers.org](mailto:angeles@phdreamers.org) for more information.