

Hispanic Affairs Project



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The Hispanic Affairs Project Will Support Community Members with DACA and their Families, Despite Recent Federal Announcement

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The Hispanic Affairs Project, a regional non-profit organization, will continue to support community members with DACA and their families, despite the announcement by the Trump administration Tuesday that the program will expire on March 5, 2018.

Since the program was announced in 2012, over 17,000 Coloradans (about 800,000 people nationwide)¹ have applied for and been accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. DACA was created to give protection against deportation and a work permit to certain young people who arrived to the country as children and met other requirements, such as having no serious criminal record. Many individuals who are DACA recipients have lived in the United States most of their lives, and many have no memory of any other country. In partnership with local immigration attorneys and through its Board of Immigration Appeals low income immigration legal assistance accreditation, HAP itself has helped over 150 people in the region apply for DACA.

“The results, between 2012 and 2017,” says HAP member Diego Rubalcava-Alvarez, “have been beautiful. Sons and daughters of the Western Slope have gone off to college, or gotten jobs to support their families, just like any other young person. Although many in our community did not qualify for DACA, all of us benefited from having more young people unafraid to achieve their dreams.” Furthermore, many DACA recipients actively give back to their communities, and are key volunteers and leaders in organizations like HAP.

But in the aftermath of Tuesday's decision by President Donald Trump and the announcement by Attorney General Jeff Sessions², the Hispanic Affairs Project wants the community to know the following four key points:

1. If you already have DACA, your DACA status and work permit will be valid until the expiration date listed on the documents
2. If your DACA documents will expire before March 5, 2018, USCIS will only accept applications they receive before October 5, 2017

¹ <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-i-821d-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals>

² <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>
Engaging the Immigrant and Refugee Communities in Western Colorado

3. If you do not already have DACA, unfortunately you can no longer apply for the program
4. Advance parole (permission to travel outside the country and return) will no longer be granted to DACA recipients

Meanwhile, HAP is positioned to be able to help those affected by Tuesday's decision. Community members can make appointments with HAP's immigration legal assistance staff by calling the HAP office at (970) 249-4115. HAP also holds monthly information sessions on a variety of topics in Grand Junction, Montrose and Gunnison, with locations and times listed on HAP's website, <http://hapgi.org>. HAP regularly holds "Know Your Rights" trainings, to teach people that they all have constitutional rights that might help them when confronted by ICE agents, and to spread the word about the statewide incident hotline telephone number 1-866-864-8341 (1-866-UNITE-4-1) people can call to speak to volunteers if they witness a raid, or to document their stories if their family members have been detained.

Importantly, HAP is also committed to leadership development, providing the immigrant community with the resources to advocate for themselves. HAP members have met with elected officials and organized with their neighbors and friends. Over the years, together with partners across the state, we have achieved successes such as in-state tuition for Dreamers, drivers license access for all, and counties that recognize that holding a person on suspicion of being in the country without permission is unconstitutional. On Tuesday, Senators Bennet and Gardner announced support for the bipartisan DREAM Act in congress, which would create a legal status and pathway to citizenship for those who would have qualified for DACA if it was not rescinded, as well as for many more. These kinds of successes would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of HAP members and allies.

There are many ways to get involved. HAP is cosponsoring a Latinx Youth Leadership Conference on Saturday, September 23 from 9 – 5 at CMU. Contact LATINXYLC1@gmail.com for more info. HAP will also be hosting its annual John Kiernan Awards Dinner on Saturday, October 7 from 5:30 – 7 at the Catholic Outreach building in Grand Junction. Contact the HAP office for tickets. And there is work left to do to encourage the Western Slope's congressional representative in the House, Scott Tipton, to join Senators Bennet and Gardner in supporting the DREAM Act. On Saturday 9/9 from 10 – 11 AM, many groups and individuals in Montrose will rally at the corner of Main Street and Townsend Ave in support of Dreamers.

Interested individuals are encouraged to get in touch with their local HAP members or call the HAP office at (970) 249-4115 to find out more.