

Supporting Undocumented Young Persons

The Department of Children and Families serves all persons who come under its purview, regardless of immigration status. The array of services available to other DCF clients is also be available to undocumented persons. It is important to note, undocumented immigrant young adults committed to DCF and those participating in SPM are entitled to the same fiscal supports. There are no laws that require DCF staff to report undocumented persons to the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

It is estimated that there are over 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the US. 3.6 million entered the US before their 18th birthday and 1.8 million entered before their 16th birthday.

According to the U.S. Department of Education in their resource guide for Supporting Undocumented Youth, these young persons are one of the most vulnerable groups served by U.S. schools. Estimates indicate that 80,000 undocumented youth turn 18 and approximately 65,000 graduate from high school every year.

- Just 54 percent of undocumented youth have at least a high school diploma, compared to 82 percent of their U.S.-born peers.
- Further, only 5 to 10 percent of undocumented high school graduates continue their education and enroll in an institution of higher education, and far fewer successfully graduate with a degree.

Political tensions and fear may result in many undocumented individuals avoiding routine activities. They are 3 times likely to experience psychological distress than other immigrated families; have limited access to physical and mental health services and suffer depression, anxiety and trauma related stress.

Practice Guide Resource: The DCF Immigration Practice Guide provides a comprehensive overview of immigration law, paths to citizenship, human trafficking issues, engaging clients who are immigrants and Special Immigration Juvenile Cases.

A Special Immigrant Juvenile status is defined as an immigration status granted to undocumented children that have been abandoned, abused or neglected, and are unable to be reunified with a parent.

A (SIJS) petition is filed on behalf of an undocumented child committed to DCF if reunification with one or both child's parents is not appropriate. The social worker reviews the case with the DCF area office attorney and then contact is made with an immigration attorney who will handle the case. The social worker will receive a packet from the immigration attorney requesting that specific items are gathered and completed. Some of the information required:

- Sealed Medical exam
- Birth Certificate
- Passport photos of the child
- A fully completed Biographic Information (G-325 A)
- Copies of Commitment order and other documents

The SIJS is a time sensitive process and obtaining these documents takes time so it's important for the social worker to gather these documents as quickly as possible.

Information: There are many resources and supports for undocumented young people. Appendix III Resources for Undocumented Children and Families is found in the practice guide.

To help with terminology, the practice guide also has a list of definitions related to immigration and undocumented people.

DCF also has the Office of Multicultural Affairs that can consult on information on immigration and undocumented children. The DCF Academy of Workforce Development also provides trainings on immigration and undocumented children and other relevant topics. If a case specific matter needs consultation, please feel free to connect with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Transitional Supports and Success Division.

Legal reference: Specialized Child Welfare Subject Matter - Immigration 21-13

Cross reference: DCF Immigration Practice Guide