

# **Biden to expand access to health care for undocumented immigrants brought to U.S. as children**

April 14 2023, by Cara Murez

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Hundreds of thousands of immigrants brought to the United States as children may soon be eligible to receive federally funded health care.

President Joe Biden on Thursday [announced](#) the extension of eligibility for Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act [health insurance](#) exchanges to those in DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

"Today, my administration is announcing our plan to expand [health coverage](#) for Dreamers, the thousands of [young people](#) brought to the U.S. as kids," Biden said in a Tweet announcing the change. "We're not done fighting for their pathway to citizenship, but we're getting them the opportunities they deserve in the meantime."

While other classes of immigrants, such as those with temporary protected status and [asylum seekers](#), can already purchase health insurance as part of the Affordable Care Act, the DACA participants have not had the opportunity because they do not meet the definition of having "lawful presence" in the United States.

The Biden administration would change that.

DACA, created in 2012, was meant to give children illegally brought to this country by their parents the opportunity to work legally and not be deported. They pay taxes, but they don't receive the same benefits as U.S. citizens.

About 580,000 people were still enrolled in DACA in late 2022, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

"The Biden administration is taking an important step to expand access to health care for DACA beneficiaries, and though the formal reach of this expansion is delimited—it will apply to about 580,000 people—the benefits are resounding," [Jamila Michener](#), an associate professor of

government and policy at Cornell University and co-director of the Cornell Center for Health Equity, said in a statement.

"Evidence indicates that coverage expansions like this improve health outcomes and help rectify the systematic exclusion of immigrants from our health care system—an exclusion that drives and exacerbates racial and economic health inequities," Michener added.

"There are also broader benefits to the entire health care system. Having sizeable groups of people who live, work, go to school and make their home in the U.S. but cannot access vital health benefits is bad for everyone," she explained. "It makes preventative care less accessible, thus driving up the cost of emergency care. It proliferates sickness and vulnerability in ways that harm families, communities and local economies. No one wins when immigrants cannot readily access [health care](#)."

Still, the DACA program has faced its challenges.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is prevented from processing any new applications because of court challenges and Congress can't reach an agreement on immigration reforms, the *Associated Press* reported.

While only about 8% of Americans currently don't have [health](#) insurance thanks to increases in eligibility and subsidies, about half of 20 million [immigrants](#) don't have insurance, according to the nonprofit [KFF](#).

**More information:** The Anti-Defamation League has [more](#) on DACA and DREAMers.

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