

NASWGA's Position Statement

Georgia Regents' Policies 4.1.6 and 4.3.4

The National Association of Social Workers – Georgia Chapter (NASWGA) supports the NASW Code of Ethics and the principles for ethical social work practice laid out therein. Our ethical principles require social workers to “challenge social injustice,” “to behave in a trust worthy manner,” and to work to “prevent and eliminate discrimination.” Hence, we oppose the Georgia Regents’ policies 4.1.6 and 4.3.4 implemented beginning in 2011. These policies blatantly discriminate against undocumented students.

Together, the two state-level education policies-- Georgia Regents’ Policies 4.1.6 and 4.3.4 work to prevent students who migrated to this country as children from attending college in the state where they grew up – Georgia. Georgia Policy 4.1.6 bans undocumented students and students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)* from attending Georgia’s top five institutions of higher education: the University of Georgia, Georgia State, Georgia Tech, Georgia College, and Medical College of Georgia. (It is worth remembering that these are the same institutions that barred entrance to African Americans before racial desegregation was enforced 50+ years ago.) Additionally, Georgia Policy 4.3.4 requires undocumented students and students with DACA (also known as “DACAmended students”) to pay out of state tuition and fees, thereby making any public, state-funded education that they are legally able to access financially inaccessible. In addition to being discriminatory, these policies also put Georgia out of step with its peers: nationally, only 3 states (Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina) close college doors to undocumented students, and 27 states (including Florida on our southern border) provide access to in-state tuition.

Many people believe that students with DACA are exempt from the Georgia Regents’ discriminatory educational policies. This is NOT true. In Georgia, these DACA recipients can now drive and work legally, but they still face systematic discrimination in the area of higher education. DACA does nothing to protect migrant students who reside in Georgia and wish to further their education by attending one of Georgia’s top five institutions of higher education. A talented young person in Georgia with DACA can now legally drive to a top-five Georgia institution of higher education to find work in its kitchens or gardens—but cannot legally sit in its classroom and learn.

Georgia seeks to enhance its economy by investing in its students; this begins in its public K-12 school system where undocumented students currently learn alongside their citizen peers. However, if Georgia truly cares about its own economic interests, it should also open university doors to undocumented and DACAmended young people. People who do not attend college are more likely to earn substandard wages and therefore contribute less to the tax base and economic growth of the state; furthermore, low wage-earners produce little in the way of innovation.



State universities exist first and foremost to educate the people who live and pay taxes there. A recent report by the [Georgia Budget & Policy Institute](#), revealed that undocumented immigrants paid over \$352 million in state and local taxes in 2012 (the most recent year for which data is available). In short, educating young immigrants will likely increase their ability to contribute to the economic and overall welfare of the state. Certainly, immigrants already contribute substantially to Georgia's economy. Immigrants represented 13 percent of the state's workforce in 2013, and between 2006 and 2010 new immigrant business owners earned a net business income of \$2.9 billion.

NASWGA supports NASW and its partners in the fight for social justice and civil rights. We encourage and continue to urge Congress to do what is *right* which is to pass comprehensive immigration reform that mends our broken immigration system once and for all. Yet, until this occurs, we ask social workers to oppose Georgia Regents' policies 4.1.6 and 4.3.4 and to work to change them. Social work can address this injustice by encouraging Georgia's local and national organizations to issue statements; they can educate others about the policies' negative impact on undocumented and DACAmented students; they can also write members of the Board of Regents, as well as their local legislators; and they can volunteer their time to work with undocumented students. Freedom University, based in Atlanta, Georgia and U-Lead in Athens are two organizations working to support undocumented and DACAmented students in their goals to become educated. They are always looking for volunteers.

NASWGA advocates for the profession of social work and adheres to the principles outlined within the Code of Ethics to guide our work. Guided by social work ethics and human rights principles, we believe that decisions about access to higher education should be made on the basis of individual capacity, merit, and need—and not on discriminatory grounds of immigration status. We strongly believe in improving the lives and communities of all whom the social work profession serves and we stand firm in our belief that social injustice and discrimination must be eliminated to protect the vulnerable.

**Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a 2012 Executive Order, prevents the immediate deportation and provides temporary Social Security numbers and work permits to certain young migrants those who were under 16 when they got here and arrived in the U.S. before 2007. DACA status is temporary and must be renewed every two years; for each application, the government assesses a fee of \$465.*