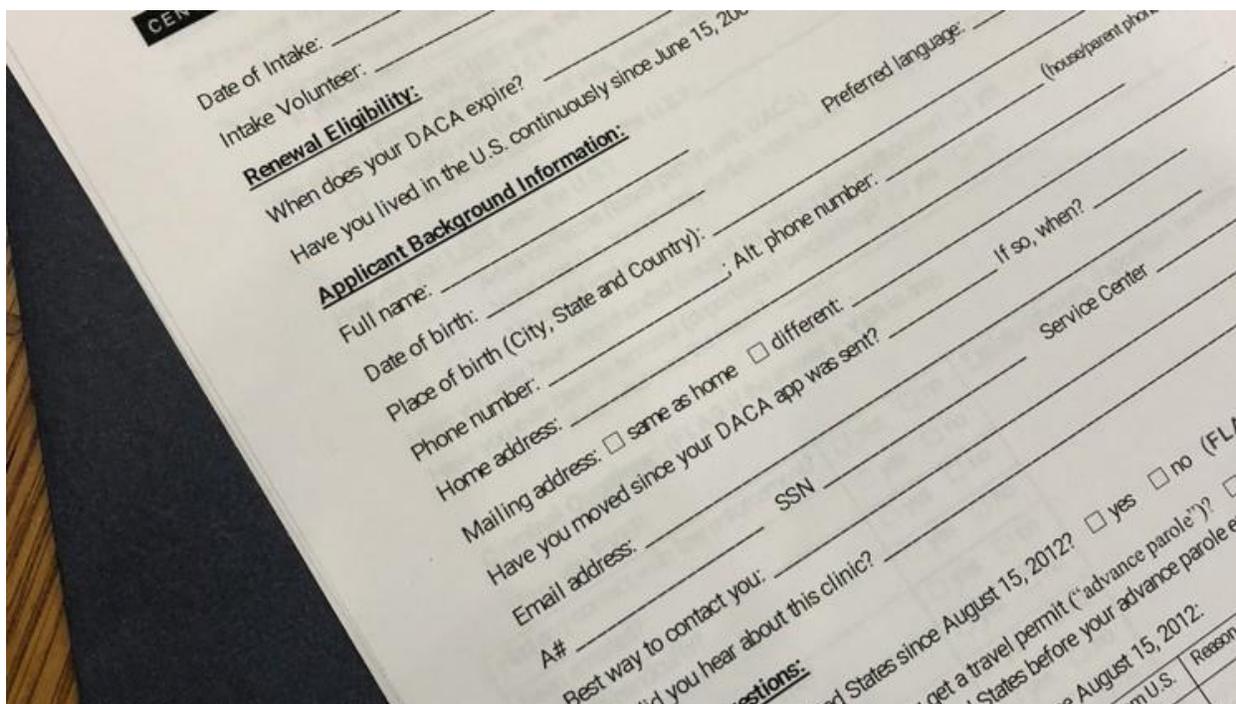


DACA recipients renew protections while they can

By [Nancy Flores](#) - American-Statesman Staff



The Mexican Consulate in Austin last week hosted a DACA renewal clinic. (Contributed by Consulate General of Mexico)

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When a federal court order this month allowed recipients of [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) to temporarily renew the permits that allow young immigrants to live and work in the United States legally, many eligible DACA holders across the country rushed to take advantage of the unique small window of opportunity.

In Austin, immigrant legal services providers and advocacy groups banded together to host a DACA renewal clinic last week that drew about 50 renewal seekers to [Austin's](#)

Mexican Consulate. This week's continued demand for renewals has prompted those groups to bolster their coordinated efforts as part of the Texas Here to Stay coalition and provide an additional DACA renewal clinic on Saturday at Refugee Services of Texas in North Austin.

While cities such as Los Angeles and Houston saw long lines of DACA recipients form at nonprofit groups in the early morning hours, the situation has been less chaotic here. Coalition members said that working together through the past year's immigration twists and turns — from the end of the temporary protected status program for some to President Donald Trump rescinding DACA — has helped strengthen community efforts to respond quickly to changes.

"It's been a challenging and emotional roller coaster ride," said Sara Ramirez, executive director of Catholic Charities of Central Texas. "So it's better to be a united front."

The nonprofit began receiving a surge of DACA renewal-related phone calls and requests for consultations late last week, and it has redirected some staff to focus solely on DACA cases. With community legal clinics in place, though, nonprofits have been able to refer clients they can't see right away to those events.

After Trump rescinded the DACA program in September, Ramirez said the organization saw a drop in the amount of average monthly DACA consultations from about 140 to 30 last month. Now, the recent uptick has changed everything. "But we're prepped and ready to go," Ramirez said.

A pending Justice Department appeal to the court order might mean more changes are ahead.

"I don't think anyone should wait and see what happens," said Megan Sheffield, an attorney at the Equal Justice Center. "Anyone who has DACA should consult an attorney."

Having to move fast isn't always possible for families who must spend \$495 to renew a DACA application for each child. To ensure that eligible families don't miss out, Austin's Mexican Consulate is offering partial financial assistance to help cover a portion of the costs based on the family's need.



“It’s really difficult, but we’ve adapted to this way of responding to what comes next and created a good system of rapid response,” said Blanca Gaviño, consul for protection and legal affairs at the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin.

No new DACA applications are being accepted. Sheffield said that only those who have had DACA in the past and still meet the eligibility requirements can apply for renewal.

If the court order is reversed, she added, there’s no guarantee that those renewal cases will be adjudicated. When DACA was rescinded in September, applications that had been submitted were still processed. She hopes that, if the court order is reversed, the submitted applications will still be processed as well.

“There are a lot of individuals who welcome this opportunity to renew,” Sheffield said. “But there are still lots of questions about finding a permanent solution.”

DACA, TPS renewal clinic

When: 1-3 p.m. Saturday

Where: Refugee Services of Texas, 500 E. St. Johns Ave.

To register online, visit Bit.ly/TPS01-27 or call 512-954-5000. Attendees are advised to bring a copy of their previous DACA application as well as passport photos, work permit or copy of DACA approval notice, and photo identification. If attendees have a criminal history, they should take any documents related to their case.