



**Senator José Peralta
New York State
DREAM Act**

Frequently Asked
Questions





**This FAQ was made in collaboration with Goddard
Riverside Options Center, uAspire, CUNY, SUNY, HESC,
The Hispanic Federation, and Young Invincibles.**

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1) DREAM ACT

A. What is the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act?

Passed in 2019, the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act (NYS DREAM Act) allows people with or without immigration status to apply for New York state financial aid. However, applicants must meet the eligibility requirements of the individual grants or scholarships.

B. What the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act does not do?

The NYS DREAM Act does not allow people who are undocumented to apply for Federal financial aid, nor does it provide a path to citizenship or immigration status. The NYS DREAM Act does not mean applicants automatically receive state financial aid. Some state aid is based on need or academics. Applicants must qualify for the specific state funded financial aid programs. ****See [AWARDS Below](#)****

2) José Peralta NYS DREAM Act Eligibility

C. Am I eligible for the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act?

To be eligible for the NYS DREAM Act, there are three requirements to consider: 1) permanent home in NYS and immigration status; 2) education or in-state tuition requirement, and 3) timeframe of applying to a NYS college.

1. Permanent Home in NYS?

- **YES:** For those whose permanent home is in NYS, the NYS DREAM Act allows the following immigration statuses to apply:
 - i. Undocumented (without lawful immigration status)
 - ii. T-Visa or U-Visa
 - iii. Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
 - iv. DACA Student
 - Definitions for statuses below.
- **NO:** For those whose permanent home is **NOT** in NYS, the NYS DREAM Act opens the opportunity to apply for NYS financial aid to both citizens and non-citizens, as follows:
 - i. Undocumented (without lawful immigration status)
 - ii. T-Visa or U-Visa
 - iii. Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
 - iv. DACA Student
 - v. U.S. Citizen
 - vi. Paroled refugee
- **Permanent Home Definitions:**
 - i. Permanent home is in NYS if you have resided in New York State for 12 continuous months prior to applying.
 - ii. Unless you are a dependent— if your parents claim you as a dependent on their tax returns, then your parents' home is your permanent home.
 - Your parent(s) resided in New York State for 12 or more continuous months at the time you applied, your permanent home is in NYS.
 - If your parents reside outside of NYS, your permanent home not in New York State.

2. Education or in-state tuition requirements—Must meet one of the following:
 - Attended a NYS high school for 2 or more years AND graduated from a NYS high school.
 - Received a NYS high school equivalency diploma.
 - Charged the NYS resident in-state tuition rate at a SUNY or CUNY college for any reason other than residency.

3. Timeframe of applying for a NYS award—must be within the following timeframes:
 - Enroll or enrolled for undergraduate study at a NYS college within 5-years of receiving your NYS high school Diploma or equivalency.
 - Enroll or enrolled for graduate study at a NYS college within 10-years of receiving your NYS high school Diploma or equivalency.
 - If you were charged in-state tuition at a SUNY or CUNY for any reason other than residency, there is not a timeframe requirement.

See our [Eligibility Flow Chart!](#)

D. Define the different immigration statuses.

- Temporary Protected Status (TPS): allows foreign nationals to remain in the U.S. if during the time they were in the U.S. something catastrophic happened in their country of origin preventing their safe return – for example war, famine, natural disaster, or epidemic. TPS allows people to work legally and be protected from deportation.
- T-Visa: allows the granting of lawful status to noncitizen victims of human trafficking, as well as their immediate family members, who assist in the prosecution of the trafficking. It allows people to remain and work temporarily in the U.S.
- U-Visa: allows for the granting of lawful status to noncitizen crime victims who suffered significant physical or mental abuse (and their immediate family members) who assist in the prosecution of the crime. It allows people to remain and work temporarily in the U.S.
- Without Lawful Immigration Status: living in the U.S. unlawfully either because lawful status never existed (including those with DACA) or has ended.

E. If a I live in the state of New York, but my parents do not, can I still get NYS aid?

Yes! Dependent students who meet the NYS DREAM Act eligibility requirements are now eligible to receive NYS Aid under the NYS DREAM Act even if their parents live outside of NYS. The Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) considers a dependent student’s permanent home to be wherever their parent(s) live. A student in this situation would choose “I am a [status] whose permanent home is not in New York State.”

F. For dependent students whose home is not in NYS, what address should they enter on the application? Should they provide their parent’s address or their NYS Address, if they live with other relatives?

If the student has biological or adoptive parents who live outside of NYS and they are considered dependent students [by the Tuition Assistant Program \(TAP\) standards](#), their address should be their parents’ permanent address.

G. What are the eligibility requirements for in-state tuition?

- Even if they have not lived in NYS for an entire year, an undocumented student and other non-residents may be eligible for the resident tuition rate if:
 1. The student attended a New York State (NYS) high school for two or more years and graduated; OR attended an approved New York State program for the High School Equivalency and received an HSE from New York State.
 2. **AND** applied for an award to attend an institution of higher education for the undergraduate study within five years of receiving a state high school diploma or equivalency diploma; OR applied for an award to attend a higher education institution for graduate study within ten years of receiving a New York state high school diploma or equivalency diploma.
- Institutions of higher education have many other reasons to allow a nonresident to pay in-state tuition. If an undocumented person is offered in-state tuition for any reason other than residency, they may still qualify for the NYS DREAM Act if they meet the other requirements.

3) Confidentiality

H. Who will be able to see the information I provide on my NYS DREAM Act application?

- Information provided on your application will be seen by HESC and its trusted vendor, International Scholarship & Tuition Services (ISTS).
- Certain information (such as income) may be verified by other State agencies such as the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance or the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, to the extent necessary to determine your eligibility.
- **However, for purposes of your application for NYS financial aid, your citizenship or immigration status will only be known by HESC and its trusted vendor, ISTS.**

I. Will my college share my immigration status?

Colleges are prohibited by law from reporting a student's immigration status without the consent of the student.

J. How will my information be used?

Your information will only be used to determine your eligibility to receive state financial aid.

K. My parents are nervous that applying for the NYS DREAM Act will put me at risk of deportation, what do I tell them?

- Under the law, the immigration status you provide on the NYS DREAM Act application must be held confidential by New York State and your college.
- The information provided in the application will **only** be used to the extent necessary to determine your eligibility for an award and for the purposes of administering financial aid that you are eligible to receive.
- Applicants without lawful immigration status will not be asked for their home address and will **not** have to upload financial records. NYS DREAM ACT includes applicants with or without immigration status, so undocumented people are not singled out in the application process.

4) Awards

L. What awards may I qualify for?

The José Peralta New York State DREAM Act provides that any students, regardless of immigration status, may apply for New York State funded financial aid awards. This means that an undocumented student would only qualify for state awards not federal. However, you must meet the eligibility requirements of each program.

M. What awards does NYS provide?

See the [full list](#) of New York State provided programs. The following are the most popular state awards. Use links to learn more about eligibility and to sign up to be notified when the award applications open.

State Grant	Summary
Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)	The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), helps eligible New York residents attending in-state postsecondary institutions pay for tuition. Grant based on applicant’s family New York State taxable income.
Part-time TAP	Part-time TAP helps eligible New York residents attending in-state postsecondary institutions on a part-time basis pay for tuition.
NYS Aid for Part-time Study	The NYS Aid for Part-time Study (APTS) program provides grant assistance for eligible part-time students enrolled in approved undergraduate studies.
Scholarship	Summary
Excelsior Scholarship	The program covers tuition for eligible SUNY and CUNY students. It applies to families making \$125,000 or less in 2019.
Enhanced Tuition Awards	This program provides a maximum of \$3,000 to students attending a private college.
New York State Part-time Scholarship (PTS) Award	Provides scholarship awards to students who attend a SUNY or CUNY Community College part-time and maintain a 2.0 GPA. Students can receive \$1,500 per semester for up to 2 years.

N. Will I be eligible for Opportunity Programs, if I complete the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act?

Yes! Students who are found eligible for NYS DREAM Act funding are eligible to apply for NYS sponsored Opportunity Programs. These programs offer several benefits including Pre-freshman summer programs and additional support services.

- Opportunity Programs include:
 - Higher Educational Opportunity Program (HEOP)
 - Liberty Partnership Program
 - Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP)
 - Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP)
 - Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK)
 - College Discovery Opportunity Program (CD)

At SUNY (EOP) and CUNY (CD and SEEK) schools, once accepted, students will be eligible to receive financial awards such as book vouchers as available at the school.

At private institutions (HEOP), students will most likely be eligible for a full need package. Admission to HEOP will vary and may be contingent on whether the college has funding to meet students' full need.

Similarly, students who are found eligible for TAP will be considered for supportive CUNY programs such as ASAP, ACE (senior college version of ASAP available at John Jay and Lehman colleges), and Macaulay Honors College. They will receive funding to cover whatever amount of their tuition is not covered as well as program awards for fees and stipends.

Remember! Admission to these programs requires financial verification

O. How will I be notified about an award, and how to I accept it?

- You will be notified by email when a determination has been made regarding your eligibility for each award for which you have applied. If you are determined to be eligible for an award, your next step will be to accept the award!
- For certain awards, you must sign a contract agreeing to live and/or work in New York State for a required number of years after graduation as a condition of receiving the award. If you decide not to accept an award with a post-graduation requirement, please indicate that on the contract.

P. Once I have applied for funds under the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act, can I take a break from school?

It depends on the specific criteria of the financial aid program under which the student is applying for and receiving financial aid. Students wouldn't be eligible after dropping out (stopping out) for Excelsior or ETA. As for TAP, students need to make sure they fulfill the other eligibility criteria [here](#).

Q. Will I still need to complete the affidavit with my college to determine my eligibility for in-state tuition?

HESC does not require an affidavit. Students should consult with their college about any affidavit requirement at their college.

R. When will funds be available?

Awards are processed on a rolling basis. There is no time estimate for when students will be informed about their awards or the disbursement timeline. Award notices are sent via email.

S. Where can I find my award?

Students will receive an email with their award amount. All students can also access their financial aid package through their student portal to see their award amounts.

5) Application—Open now!

T. What does the José Peralta DREAM Act application consist of?

The NYS DREAM Act application, found on the [\(HESC\)](#) website, is separated into two parts.

PART 1: Determines your eligibility for NYS DREAM Act.

- It is important to make sure the information you provide in this section is accurate. **You cannot go back and change your immigration status and other information once you submit it.**
- After you complete this section you will be sent to the second part of your application and you will receive an automated email reminding you to complete PART 2 of the application.

PART 2: Apply for NYS Financial Aid Programs

- After you complete the NYS DREAM Act eligibility section of the application, you will be sent to apply for NYS aid programs.
- Any program that has open enrollment will be available on the application's dashboard.
- On this dashboard you should be able to sign up to be notified when other state financial aid programs become available.

[Click here](#) to see HESC's Step by Step User Guide on how to complete PART 1's DREAM Act eligibility requirements.

U. What information will I need to apply?

The information an undocumented applicant will need to apply includes:

1. High School Education Details:
 - Such as status and completion.
2. Student citizenship and immigration status.
3. Student Information:
 - First and last name, and other names in which you have been known.
 - State/Zip code.
 - Date of birth.
 - Marital Status.
4. Notification Information: email to get information on awards.
5. Student College, Grade level, and degree the applicant will be working on (bachelors, associates, etc.)
6. **Remember**—If you are undocumented, do not provide your address.

V. What documentation will I need to apply?

- See [NYS DREAM Act Supporting Documents](#) for information on the types of documents you will need to apply.
- Supporting Documents: you will be asked to submit documentation throughout the application based on the information you provide. Your application will not be considered complete until all documentation is submitted.
 - Acceptable file types: **.pdf, .tif, .png, .jpeg, .jpg, .bmp, and .xps**. Any other formats will not be reviewed, and your application will remain incomplete.
 - **DO NOT UPLOAD WORD DOCUMENTS!!**
 - [How to convert a word document into PDF](#)
 - **REMEMBER**—If you are undocumented redact your address from all documents.
 - See below for tips on how to redact your documents.

W. What grants, scholarships, and awards may I apply for through the application portal?

Students meeting the NYS Dream Act eligibility criteria can apply for one or more HESC-administered grant and scholarship programs through the NYS DREAM Act portal. The application will instruct you on how to apply for all of the available awards.

X. How to monitor my application status?

- You will be able to monitor the status of your application online, through the DREAM Act application portal, after submitting your application.
- **NOTE:** It is the applicant's responsibility to monitor their application and ensure it is marked complete.

Y. How long does it take between the eligibility application to be approved before being able to do the financial portion?

As soon as you finish the PART 1—Eligibility portion of the application and submit all documentation, you can immediately apply for open NYS financial aid programs. In fact, the application will automatically send you to PART 2 after completing PART 1.

Z. Can I start and return to the application or must it be completed all at once?

The application can be saved and then continued.

AA. Can I update my college name after submitting the NYS DREAM Act application?

Yes! Additionally, if a student transfers to a different college, they should go back into their application and update to reflect the college the student is attending.

BB. Whoops! I selected the incorrect residency status; can I go back and correct it?

You can't go back into the application to change it, you must call HESC (888-697-4372) to have it changed.

CC. What should I do if I don't have a college student ID#?

HESC will provide those who are eligible with a conditional letter of award until they submit their college student ID number. Once the student ID number is submitted, they will receive the actual letter of award.

DD. Should I apply for TAP and Excelsior?

Students will be able to apply for both TAP and Excelsior funds. As a best practice, it is important to check eligibility beforehand. Excelsior covers up to \$5,500 of tuition and TAP can cover up to \$5,165 of tuition. Please note that Excelsior has post-college requirements.

EE. How can I get my high school transcript?

Former students can request their transcript by filling out the [Student Records Request Form](#) and then either delivering it in person or by mail to their former high school. They should use "[Find a School](#)" on the NYC DOE website before going. They should also call the school to find out the best days to go in and if the school has moved. Students must be prepared to present a city or state photo ID.

If the student requests a transcript by mail, they should include a copy of a photo ID with their signature. Students can use the "[Find a School](#)" tool to find the school's mailing address.

For students whose school has since closed, they can use this page, [Requesting Student Records and Transcripts](#), to find out where they can get a copy of a transcript for a closed high school.

FF. If I have multiple names, what documentation do I need to submit?

The student needs to provide one of these documents: a court order, a marriage license, an official letter from school reflecting former and current names (NYC schools only), or another legal document reflecting other name or name change.

GG. How do I redact information on PDF?

There are a variety of ways to redact a PDF. If you have the most current version of [Adobe Reader](#), these features should be available to you. If not, print the document and white out or cover up the address and then scan it. You can also paste the PDF into a Word or Publisher Document and then cover up the information using black rectangles. Then save it as a PDF.

HH. If I must upload two documents but I am only given the option to upload one, what should I do?

Create a zip folder that has all of the high school transcripts and diploma compressed in it. Here's how:

- Students first need to save all the documents that they are going to upload to the application in the same folder. Once all have been saved, locate the files/folder you are wanting to .zip.
- Press and hold the CTRL key while clicking on (or right-click) the files or folder, select Send to, and then select Compressed (zipped) folder. A new zipped folder is created with the same name as the document they right clicked on. They can then rename it anything they want.
- From the NYS DREAM application, upload the .zip.

If the student has hard copies of all the transcripts and diploma, scan them all into one PDF.

II. Will I be asked to verify my family's income or mine?

For now, undocumented students and students approved for DACA will not be required to provide financial verification documents. Students with other immigration statuses may be asked by HESC to provide income taxes or proof of receipt of public assistance.

JJ. What if I received a diploma outside of the country?

In order to receive a TAP award, students who do not have a US high school diploma or its equivalent must take and pass an [Ability to Benefit Test](#). Students can find more information about the test, passing scores, and practice materials on their college's website.

6) Who can apply?

KK. Can I apply for the José Peralta NYS DREAM Act if I am still in high school and have not been accepted to college?

Yes! HESC will treat high school NYS DREAM Act applicants the same as all other state financial aid applicants. If a high school applicant is eligible for a NYS grant or scholarship program, they will be given a conditional acceptance award letter. Once the applicant provides their high school graduation information and college student ID and it is approved through the NYS DREAM Act application, they will receive an official award letter.

LL. If I am already in college and have been taking classes, can I apply?

Yes! Current college students can apply if they meet the eligibility criteria.

MM. If I attend(ed) boarding schools in NYS, do I qualify for NYS DREAM Act funds?

Yes! Any student who attended any high school registered with NYSED for two years and graduated may qualify if they meet all other eligibility criteria.

NN. Can non-traditional students (adults, young people who are not in high school, etc.) apply?

Yes! Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can apply.