

IMMIGRANTS – DEFINITIONS

Who is an immigrant? “Foreign born” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably in the US, and refer to persons with no US citizenship at birth. Immigrants include naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, persons on certain visas (e.g. Special immigrant visas) and undocumented immigrants.

What is the definition of an undocumented immigrant? A foreign-born person who has either entered the US “without inspection” (i.e. with no visa or other acceptable documentation) or has stayed beyond the expiration date of a visa or other status. The Department of Homeland Security and the Pew Research Center estimate the number of undocumented immigrants in the US at approximately 11.1 to 11.4 million.

What is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)? In June 2012, the Obama Administration allowed certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and eligibility for a work permit. These undocumented immigrants must have entered the US before their 16th birthday, be currently in school, a high school graduate or be honorably discharged from the military, be under 31, and not have been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor or three other misdemeanors or otherwise pose a threat to national security. The program does not provide lawful status or a path to citizenship, nor does it provide eligibility for federal welfare or student aid.” (Information from US Citizenship and Immigration Services document, December 2, 2016)

Who are “Unaccompanied Children?” This term usually refers to minors who arrive in the US alone or who are required to appear in immigration court on their own. “Unaccompanied alien child” (UAC) is a technical term defined by law as a child who: has no lawful immigration status in the US; has not attained 18 years of age; and has no parent or legal guardian in the US to provide care and physical custody.” (Information from the American Immigration Council)