

Immigrant Experience: Undocumented history may affect entry to college

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Body

Q An acquaintance of ours is an **undocumented** Mexican resident who has lived and worked in San Jose for more than 12 years. His daughter, who immigrated with him as a baby, is about to graduate from high school with very good grades.

The family has applied for citizenship but has not received it. Can the daughter apply and gain admission to California State University without a legal residence or a Social Security number? Can she do so without fear of deportation?

Carol BrooksSan Jose

A Two things are not clear: what type of immigration benefit the family has applied for and whether they've received a response from the federal immigration agency, said Alicia Spiva, an immigration representative accredited by the federal Bureau of Immigration Appeals, who works in Immigration Legal Services of Catholic Charities in San Jose.

As a general rule, when applying for admission to CSU, a student is required to provide certain information, Spiva said, such as an alien number for students who are not United States citizens or a Social Security number. If you don't have this information, you can simply note "N/A" or not applicable, Spiva said.

For more information on California State University admission requirements, visit the school system's Web site at www.calstate.edu and click on "Application, Admission and Fee Info."

Spiva cautioned that, as **undocumented immigrants**, the family **may** face deportation.

You friends should consult with an immigration attorney or a BIA-accredited representative to understand what options **may** be open to them, Spiva said.

Q Do we have to be United States citizens to apply for U.S. passports?

What document do I need to travel abroad? I am a Canadian citizen and have been living in the United States for the past five years. When am I eligible to apply for U.S citizenship? Can I keep both citizenships?

Kim DangCupertino

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A Only United States citizens can apply and secure United States passports. If you're a permanent resident, you will need your green card and your Canadian passport to travel abroad.

The length of time you've lived in the United States as a permanent resident, or a green card holder, does not automatically confer U.S. citizenship. You must apply for it, and it's a long, complex process.

I would suggest that you visit the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Web site at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm> and click on ``Naturalization."

In general, you must wait five years before you qualify to apply for citizenship. You are also required to have lived most of these five years in the United States.

The United States recognizes dual citizenships from many countries, but your home country may not. A useful guide to dual citizenship is a book called ``Citizenship Laws of the World," which can be found online (www.opm.gov/extra/investigate/IS-01.pdf).

This information is not intended as legal advice. Any person with questions about his or her individual circumstances should contact an immigration lawyer, a state-bonded immigration expert or a federally accredited immigration representative, and should not rely on general statements made in this column.

Send questions to immigration @mercurynews.com or fax (408) 288-8060. You can also write to: **Immigrant Experience**, San Jose Mercury News, Newsroom, 750 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, Calif. 95190. To have a question considered, you MUST include your name, city of residence and daytime phone number.

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