

A GUIDE FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS GOING THROUGH THE COLLEGE MATRICULATION PROCESS

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CARA College Access:
Research & Action
Creating Post-Secondary Pathways

PASA

The information in this toolkit
is current as of

October 2019

*The PAR group and CARA would like to thank the
Solon E. Summerfield Foundation for their generous support,
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FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT ITS CONTENT,
OUR PROCESS IN CREATING IT, OR COLLEGE
ACCESS: RESEARCH AND ACTION (CARA),
PLEASE CONTACT US AT **INFO@CARANYC.ORG**

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Meet the PAR Team

Undocumented young people have a right to college. This toolkit is for them. The purpose of this resource is to help undocumented students realize their college dreams by presenting new ways to look at the college application process. We also hope educators, counselors, undocumented-friendly organizations, parent(s)/guardian(s), and young people will use this toolkit to help undocumented students pursue higher education, regardless of their immigration status.

We're a group of college students living in New York City who work with College Access: Research & Action (CARA). CARA's mission is to ensure that first-generation college students, low-income students, and students of color have the knowledge and support necessary to enroll in and persist through college. As CARA College Bridge coaches we work at the high schools we attended to support students with applying to and enrolling in college. Over the years we've encountered many unanswered questions about how to support undocumented students with applying to college. Hearing from students who believed their immigration status would restrict them from pursuing higher education motivated us to develop this toolkit. As CARA's in-house Participatory Action Research group (PAR), we began conducting our own research on the topic in 2017, gathering specific information to help us better counsel undocumented students in pursuing post-secondary paths. Since we began developing our toolkit the The Senator José Peralta New York State DREAM Act passed, providing undocumented students living in New York with access to state financial aid. We hope to educate toolkit readers about these expanded opportunities and, more broadly, encourage politicians to see that this social issue is of utmost importance.

YOUR RIGHT TO COLLEGE

In This Section

Letter of Encouragement

**Your Immigration Status
& Legal Support**

**Getting Support From
Your High School**

**What Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
Need to Know & Provide**

Talking to Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

I'm an immigrant, employee, researcher, and a resilient human being. Also, I'm a first-generation college student majoring in International Criminal Justice and minoring in Sociology and Human Services at John Jay College. I immigrated to the US with my immediate family 10 years ago with thousands of goals and not knowing the language. I became part of PAR because I feel the need to help out my community (Bushwick, Brooklyn) and have the knowledge to make a change in my generation. As an immigrant I understand the struggle and I want you to believe in yourself and in the process. You'll accomplish all your goals if you're determined and work hard for it. I'm fighting for your education rights and I want you to never give up.



– Pamela Vasquez

I am a first-generation student majoring in Forensic Psychology at John Jay College. My career goal is to be a clinical psychologist and work with adolescents. My college journey has taught me that life is not a fairytale. Everywhere you go, you will have obstacles in your way. It is up to you to decide whether you will let those obstacles stop you from who you want to be. As an immigrant to this country, I know how challenging it can be to follow your dreams, but I am a true believer that if you want something to happen in your life, you must work for it. This project is a reflection of my belief that your immigration status should never stop you from becoming who you want to be in life. Never settle, YOU are the pilot of your own life.



– Melissa Rivera

Letter Of Encouragement

Hey– we get it, applying to college is a very stressful process. We’ve been there. That’s why we’re here for you now 😊😊

If you recently immigrated to this country, don’t feel discouraged! Even if you are without your family, you can always find people who will support you. Don’t feel ashamed about your situation, or if you’re struggling to speak up. These things don’t define you. You’ve already been through a lot; feel proud!

Your story means something, and it’s what has brought you all the way to where you are. Don’t be afraid to share it. Never underestimate the power of a college essay. Get your computer and express what kind of student you really are, and make clear how ready you are to strive. Explain why you are applying and what it is that makes you unique among other students. The college essay is your time to shine and tell your story.

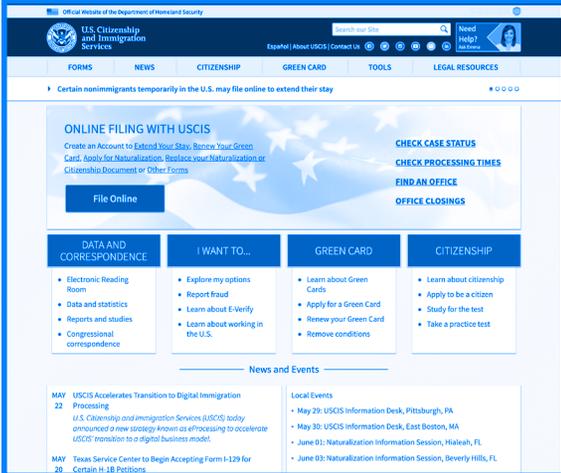
Talk about things that truly reflect you, your abilities not only as a student but a person. You got this, we believe in you and your potential! 💪 

PAR

Your Immigration Status & Legal Support

If you don’t know what your immigration status is, now is the time to have those conversations so you can figure out what documents you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) may need to provide for identification and proof of income.

The best go-to person is a lawyer who is licensed to explain your rights and what next steps your family may need to take. But an easy way to get started is by using this FREE online resource:



The screenshot shows the official website of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The top navigation bar includes tabs for FORMS, NEWS, CITIZENSHIP, GREEN CARD, TOOLS, and LEGAL RESOURCES. The main content area features a prominent 'ONLINE FILING WITH USCIS' section with a 'File Online' button. Below this are four columns of links: 'DATA AND CORRESPONDENCE', 'I WANT TO...', 'GREEN CARD', and 'CITIZENSHIP'. A 'News and Events' section is visible at the bottom.



<https://www.uscis.gov>

Getting Support From Your High School

Think Broadly About Post-Secondary Options

College is not your only post-secondary option. There are many options out there: certificate programs, trade schools, vocational programs, and more. Ask your counselor for resources!

Partnerships / Community-Wide Events

Most high schools have partnerships with other schools and organizations to connect students and families to resources. Drop by the college office and ask for more info!

Have Relevant Information Ready

In order to better support you through the entire process, your college counselor needs to know basic information about you.

But be aware that, by law, schools, colleges, and counselors are NOT allowed to share any of your personal information with federal agents.

They are also NOT allowed to ask you about your immigration status, but letting them know will allow them to find you the appropriate resources.

NY is a Sanctuary State

NYS protects immigrants. NYC high schools feel the same way, so do not feel ashamed or be afraid to ask for help and talk about your immigration status. High schools and CBOs have the necessary resources to send their undocumented students off to college!

What Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Need To Know & Provide

DOCUMENTS



Application Fees

Every college has an application fee (**CUNY: \$65 for up to 6 schools • SUNY: \$50 per college • Private: varies**). Fee waivers are available. Contact your high school counselor for more info.

Proof of Income

If your parent(s)/guardian(s) did not file taxes, the school's financial aid office will still want to know how much your family income is. **A notarized letter** from the place where your parent/guardian works stating how much they earned and how long they've worked there is also a proof of income.



Documents For Verification

If you qualify, expect schools to also request proofs of your **WIC, food stamps, and other benefits**.



Talking To Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

P

PAR ›

Hello parent(s)/guardian(s),
Have you thought about college for your child?

Yes, but not much.
What can I do to help my child?

This process does not only involve students, but also parent(s)/guardian(s). It's crucial that you and your child together come up with a plan before starting the application process so that you are on the same page and your child doesn't feel alone. In your plan take into account a school's location, diversity, and cost.

Is your child aware of their immigration status?

Yes

P

PAR ›

Good. It is ideal that your child understands his/her immigration status. Seek professional advice to find out what that means in regards to applying and paying for college.

Is college the only option for my child after high school?

No. In fact, college is not the only way to build a future. College is not for everybody. Some choose to do a vocational program, get a certificate, or to go directly to the workforce—even kids who are US citizens.

Where can we go for help?

For professional help/advice regarding school, reach out to your child's college counselor. They can point you in the right direction. They know all about the college matriculation process, from applying for financial aid to enrolling for classes.

YOU CAN USE THIS INFORMATION AS A GUIDE FOR TALKING TO YOUR PARENT(S)/ GUARDIAN(S) AND EXPLAINING WHAT THE COLLEGE PROCESS WILL BE

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

In This Section

Can I Afford to Go to College?

**The Senator Jose Peralta
NYS Dream Act**

“

I'm currently a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in Computer and Information Systems Management at The City College of New York. Throughout my years in education, I was blessed to meet people who influenced me to always keep moving forward and never give up. Ever since I was a kid I always had an interest in computers and how they functioned. As the years went by during undergrad, not only did my passion for computers rise, but I also started having an interest in gaining leadership skills and being able to lead a team to achieve all proposed goals. As a student at Lehman College, I was the president of a student-led club called The Lehman Dream which advocated for and supported undocumented folks on campus. Due to my interest in leadership, I was able to obtain a job as the residential director of Lehman College.



– Jesus Hernandez

I am a recent graduate from John Jay College. I majored in Fraud Examination & Financial Forensics. My dream is to work for the FBI as a forensic accountant. Throughout college, I've learned that everybody has a voice and it must be used if you want something. Do not be afraid to use your voice! The worst thing that can happen is getting no for an answer. But that's okay. Regroup your thoughts, find out why it didn't go your way, and attack again. I love to work out in the gym daily. The challenge it brings mentally and physically to stay on track with my body's progression is what excites me. Failure is a part of life—don't run away from it. If you aren't failing at any point of your life, you aren't challenging yourself.



– Christopher Espinal

”

Can I Afford To Go To College?

Think you can't go to college because of the cost? A lot of people think college is NOT an option for them because they see tuition rates that they can't afford to pay. But how much do they know about their options?

Think twice after this breakdown

Financial aid is money that goes towards paying the total cost of attending college for one year, which depends on the school.

That money comes from different pockets—some from the federal and state government, and some from other sources such as special opportunity programs, organizations, and private banks.

That money isn't just given to students—they must apply. How much they are given is based on how much money their parent(s)/guardian(s) make in a year. Income also determines what the family can pay towards the student's education, aka the "EFC" (Expected Family Contribution).

Unfortunately, at the moment students without a social security number or USCIS number (permanent residency) cannot apply for federal aid. However, this doesn't mean they cannot receive money to go to school.

Recently, New York passed the NYS Dream Act which allows undocumented students to receive state aid. This is a huge win for students as it can majorly decrease the cost of tuition!

Many students get discouraged about scholarships because they believe you must be a top student to receive one. However, in this toolkit we have provided many scholarships that are open to anyone regardless of immigration status, grades, test scores, etc.

Here is a list of scholarships!

<http://tiny.cc/par-scholarships>

The Senator Jose Peralta NYS Dream Act

On July 3, 2019, sources of aid became available specifically for students who don't qualify to file FAFSA applications.



The Senator Jose Peralta NYS Dream Act provides access to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), the new Excelsior Scholarship, and other state administered scholarships that were not previously available to students without a SSN.



Note that this aid is for all undocumented students, NOT just those who are DACA-mented (aka DREAMERS).

This type of aid is designed exclusively for students whose immigration status is among the following:

T-Visa

**Temporary
Protected Status (TPS)**

U-Visa

**Undocumented
or DACA-mented**

AND meet one of the following criteria:



Will graduate or have graduated from an NYS high school, after attending for at least two years

Will receive or have received an NYS high school equivalency diploma by the time they begin college

Otherwise qualify to be charged the in-state tuition rate at a CUNY or SUNY

If you qualify, APPLY!



hesc.ny.gov/dream

Despite the fear, thousands of young immigrants are applying and going to college with state funded financial aid. Besides opening access to TAP, this act also may open doors to receiving financial support from opportunity programs such as SEEK/CD, H/EOP, and ASAP. So make sure to apply to those when completing your admission applications!

For detailed information, visit



ny4dreamers.com

FINDING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

In This Section

Selected Undocu-Friendly Colleges

**Social Life & Student
Supports on Campus**

Affordable Alternative Pathways

“

Four years ago, I thought I wouldn't even set foot on a college campus—that I'd obtain a high-school diploma only to go back to being a dishwasher and delivery guy. Regardless, I put myself out there and stepped out of my comfort zone. It was a bummer to find out that regardless of being noticed by competitive schools (even some in the Ivy League), my immigration status played a big role in not being able to actually attend any of them. But against all odds, from being a simple dreamer, I'm now a college undergrad, a College Bridge coach, and the visual designer of this toolkit. So if you just persevere, you will make it. I still don't have life figured out, but no one does. So don't sweat it, just keep pushing!



— *Byron Chamorro*

Through CARA I've worked for the past four years at the Academy for Careers in Television & Film as a bridge coach, as well as a College Bridge intern at the CARA office. I'm a first-gen student currently studying English at Hunter College, and I previously attended Eugene Lang College. I'm the son of immigrants from Ecuador and Egypt. I come from a family of educators, and have always appreciated the teachers I was fortunate to meet who both empowered and inspired me to reach my full potential. Once I graduate from college, I hope to pursue teaching in the New York City public school system to continue supporting its students.



— *Ismail Hasaballa*

”

Selected Undocu-Friendly Colleges



Undocu-friendly colleges offer various emotional and academic programs and/or clubs to support undocumented students and make sure they feel safe on campus. Many also provide undocumented students with access to their school's grants, scholarships, and opportunity program resources and supports. (This list focuses on the campus support offered by schools. They are not necessarily the schools that provide the most financial support for undocumented students, as many of those are also among the most selective.)

These colleges are just a few examples of undocu-friendly schools. There are others within and beyond NY state. Although we have the State University of New York (SUNY) on our list, some SUNY schools offer more support to undocumented students than others. Be sure to do some research before applying/committing to one.

Social Life & Student Supports on Campus

Moving through the stages of life can be a lot when you're dealing with them alone. Alternatively, the following programs/clubs are inclusive ways to become a part of a community that shares similar struggles. If there does not seem to be a club for you, why not start one?

CUNY DREAMERS

<https://www.cunydreamerss.org>



BARD IMMIGRANT COALITION

<https://studentactivities.bard.edu/clubs>



RACE AND ETHNICITY

STUDENT-ORGANIZED PROGRAMS
@ CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

<https://www.conncoll.edu/campus-life/race-and-ethnicity-programs-at-unity-house/student-organizations>



IDEAS

THE CENTER FOR INCLUSION DIVERSITY
EQUITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

<https://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/osema/ideas>



Alternative Affordable Pathways

Life isn't one size fits all. Understandably, there are responsibilities and other life events that may change your course in life. However, just because college may not be in your journey, it doesn't determine or devalue your success. These organizations can support you as you transition out of high school.

THE DOOR

<https://door.org>



- LEGAL IMMIGRATION SERVICES
- JOB OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE THE ROAD

<https://maketheroadny.org>



- ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES
- HEALTHCARE

CO-OPTECH

<http://www.co-optech.org>



- VOCATIONAL TRADE PROGRAM
- JOB/INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

NYSYLC

<https://www.nysylc.org>



- SCHOLARSHIPS
- NON-CITIZEN GUIDE TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

4 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

In This Section

Before-Applying Checklist

College Application Timeline

I am a Queensborough Community College graduate. I'm pursuing a degree in Psychology at Queens College. I came to the United States when I was 12 with a dream of getting a higher education. What I did not know was that it would be so overwhelming. In my high school senior year I was so excited to apply to and attend a private university that had the college feeling I saw in the movies. However, colleges can be really expensive and my family could not afford it. So, I looked for a college that was affordable and had a lovely campus. That is when I came across Queensborough Community College, which has low tuition and an amazing campus. Now that I look back I don't regret not going to a private college. I found what I was looking for all along in a CUNY campus.



– Ruth Camacho

I am very passionate about helping to bridge the gap between higher learning resources and public high school students. I am currently at CUNY Queens College pursuing a post-baccalaureate for speech language pathology. Previously, I was both a youth leader and College Bridge coach at The High School of Fashion Industries and Institute of Health Professions at Cambria Heights, where I guided seniors in their post-secondary plans. I also worked at the CARA office as an intern facilitating the logistics of College Bridge training. I have also been a research assistant at The City College of New York, bringing colon cancer awareness to Harlem, mainly in areas of low socioeconomic status, and at Queens College as a coder and data analyst for children who have been diagnosed with autism and Down syndrome.



– Crystal Diaz

Before-Applying Checklist

Meet with your college advisor to go over application requirements and deadlines, like completing your college essay and other supplemental materials.

- Talk to family
- Draft personal statement
- Request letters of recommendation
- Register for and take SAT/ACT
- Start researching colleges
- Visit colleges
- Create accounts for CUNY, SUNY, private portals; begin applications

College Application Timeline

Every student who has experienced the college process has similar questions and/or concerns! As a means to help alleviate some of the stress and worries, we have created a timeline that lists tasks that need to be completed as you navigate the college process.



September

- Continue researching colleges
- Create a college list
- Confirm recommendation letters
- Revise your college essay
- Re-apply and study for the SAT if you want to retake it in October



October

- Start your CUNY, SUNY, and private applications
- Search for scholarships
- Take SAT/ACT
- Collect relevant income info



November

- Send SAT scores to your schools
- Research additional scholarships
- Start the NYS Dream Act
- Complete CUNY application



December

- Send out scores again if you re-took the SAT/ACT
- Complete scholarship requirements and submit your applications
- Before winter break, complete SUNY and private applications
- If applicable, follow up with opportunity programs requirements
- Follow up with colleges about missing materials

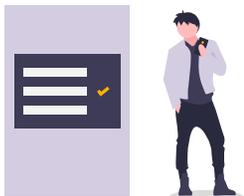


January/February

- Make sure your mid-year transcript is sent to all schools by your counselor
- Keep grades up!
- Make sure your recommendation letters have been submitted

March-April

- Check application status (acceptance letters should be coming in)
- Decide which school is right for you—get input from people you trust!
- If possible, visit the colleges you got accepted to
- Confirm placement test and study



May

- Commit to a school by May 1st (National Decision Day)
- Secure your seat (pay tuition deposit/confirm fee waiver)
- Housing deposit, if applicable

June-August

- Take placement test, if you still need to
- Follow up with missing documents for financial aid
- Send out final transcripts
- High school graduation
- Submit a copy of your high school diploma to your college
- Register and attend required orientations
- Register for classes
- Attend summer courses (if registered) / institute (for opportunity programs)
- Attend your first day of classes



WHERE TO GET MORE HELP

In This Section

Resource Guide (CBOs & Services)

“

Being a daughter of two immigrants from Dominican Republic taught me that hard work and dedication can get you anywhere. Through all of that hard work I was taught that patience, gratitude, and understanding are qualities I should always move forward with. It's why I ended up at City College studying psychology and art in order to bring art therapy to adolescents. I believe that although life is an obstacle that we must hurdle through, we don't have to do it all alone like we were taught. Through my work with CARA and PAR, I dream to help all those who are willing to fight for their right to live and create.



– Rashira Gomez

I am personally DACAmented. I was able to gain this immigration status with the help of one of the organizations listed in this toolkit. I graduated from Queensborough Community College with an AS in Liberal Arts and Sciences, and I am currently pursuing a BS in Psychology at Queens College. I have been working through CARA and the DOE for almost four years at an international high school. Based on what I have experienced and seen, pursuing a college degree is not for everyone, but getting an education is.



– Mariana Arango

”

CBOs & Services Resource Guide

Legal • Empowerment
AFRICAN COMMUNITIES TOGETHER
<http://www.africans.us>



Legal • Health • Education
NEW YORK IMMIGRATION COALITION
<https://www.nyic.org>



Empowerment
NYSYLC
<https://www.nysylc.org>



Empowerment • Education • Legal
CUNY CITIZENSHIP NOW
<http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/citizenship-now>



Legal • Social Services
CATHOLIC CHARITIES
<https://catholiccharitiesny.org>



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OFFICIAL INFORMATION

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OFFICIAL INFORMATION

**CBOs & Services
Resource Guide**

Empowerment • Education • Legal

CUNY CITIZENSHIP NOW

<http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/citizenship-now>



THE BRONX

Education

**THE JAIME LUCERO
MEXICAN STUDIES INSTITUTE**

[http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/
cuny-mexican-studies-institute](http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/cuny-mexican-studies-institute)



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**CBOs & Services
Resource Guide**

Legal • Empowerment
MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK
<https://maketheroadny.org>



Empowerment • Education • Legal
CUNY CITIZENSHIP NOW
<http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/citizenship-now>



Legal • Empowerment • Education
ATLAS: DIY
<http://www.atlasdiy.org>



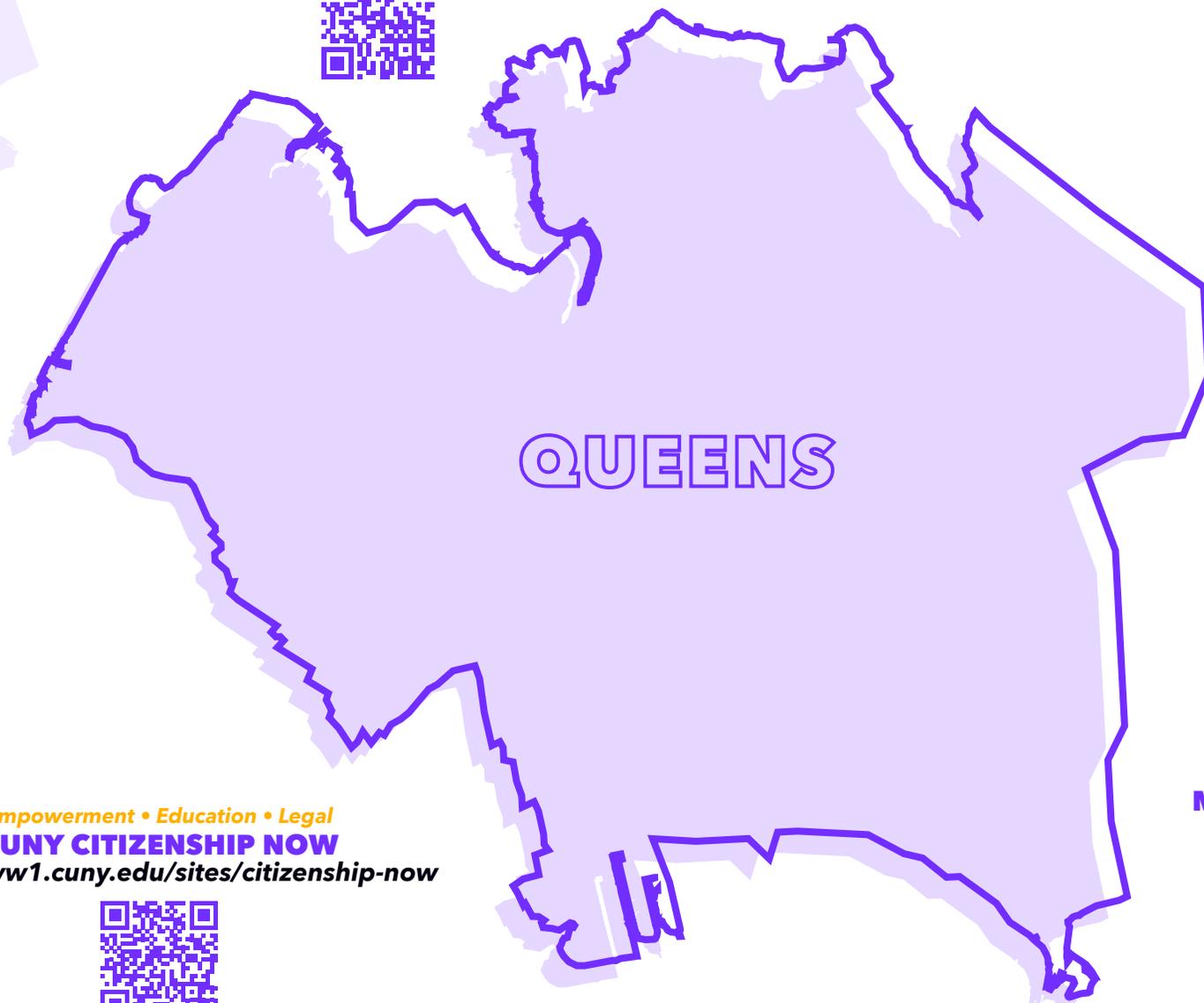
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CBOs & Services
Resource Guide



QUEENS

Empowerment • Education • Legal
CUNY CITIZENSHIP NOW
<http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/citizenship-now>



Legal • Empowerment
MINKWON CENTER
<http://minkwon.org>



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**CBOs & Services
Resource Guide**

Empowerment • Education

LA COLMENA

<https://www.lacolmenanyc.org>



Legal • Empowerment

MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

<https://maketheroadny.org>



STATEN ISLAND

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OFFICIAL INFORMATION

MEET THE PAR TEAM

I am a mother of a four-year old and a full time, first generation college student, currently pursuing my BA in Psychology at Queens College. I graduated from BMCC with my associates and then transferred into a four year college. I'm currently working two jobs. I work as a college coach in Academy for Careers in TV & Film. I also works at QSAC with autistic kids. I am part of the PAR team and feel very passionate about the project because I have family members that go through the same process. I'm doing this work because I love helping others and I'm always going out of my way for everyone. We are all equal and we all deserve to have the same opportunities in this country. Nobody should be feeling left out. I'm here to voice and represent everyone that doesn't get heard.



– Luz Espinobarro

Meet The PAR Team



Pamela Vasquez
JOHN JAY



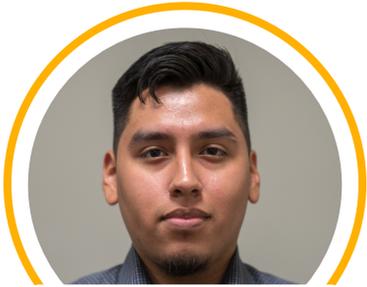
Melissa Rivera
QUEENS COLLEGE



Ruth Camacho
QUEENS COLLEGE



Crystal Diaz
QUEENS COLLEGE



Jesus Hernandez
CITY COLLEGE



Christopher Espinal
JOHN JAY



Rashira Gomez
CITY COLLEGE



Mariana Arango
QUEENS COLLEGE



Byron Chamorro
CITY TECH



Ismail Hasaballa
HUNTER COLLEGE



Luz Espinobarro
QUEENS COLLEGE

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A TOOLKIT FOR UNDOCU- MENTED STUDENTS



College Access:
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