

## **Washington's Undocumented Workers Studying Obama's Deferred Action Process**

### **Local News**

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REDMOND, Wash. - The first in a series of public meetings around the state was held Thursday in Redmond, to inform young, undocumented immigrants about their rights and responsibilities if they choose to use the new [deferred action process](#) outlined by the Obama administration. It allows young people who have been raised in the United States but are still considered undocumented, to remain in the U.S. for two years without fear of deportation if they meet certain requirements.

For those whose higher education plans have been on hold, it could be a life-changer, according to Ricardo Sanchez. He's the director of LEAP - the Latino Educational Achievement Project.

"I just can't tell you how eager they are to get on with their lives, and to be able to contribute to the United States. I mean, you know, they've adopted the United States of America, even if we legally haven't adopted them. And that's the tragedy of it; these are bright young people."

The organization OneAmerica is sponsoring the public forums in at least ten cities through August. Estimates of the number of young people in Washington who could benefit from deferred action range from 25,000 to 45,000 They include Asians, Africans and Europeans, as well as Latinos.

Washington has allowed residents who are undocumented to pay in-state tuition to attend college since 2003. But Sanchez says there is little information from schools, and misinformation is often spread among students. He's been meeting with college officials around the state, trying to clear things up. He describes the recent experience of a young woman who asked for enrollment information by phone.

"She was bounced around to six different people that took almost an hour, and then eventually was told that, 'Well, you can't even register here because you don't have a Social Security number.' Which is false. So, we talked with the presidents about this, and they agreed to work with us."

Sanchez says another false but common rumor is that undocumented students can't get college scholarships. He thinks schools at all levels have been hesitant to address these issues, or any facet of immigration, because it's controversial. And he hopes the new deferred action process will make it less so.

The next Town Hall meeting is Wed., Aug. 8, at 6:30 p.m. at the Federal Way Regional Library, 34200 1st Way S., Federal Way.