

# Deferred immigration action packets require detective work to assemble

**By Yesenia Robles**

*The Denver Post*

Luis Serrano is worn out — and a little frightened — by the complex process of applying for deferred-action status, but the 21-year-old illegal resident of the U.S. says he's decided to take the risk and try to keep himself from being deported for another two years.

Like the more than 83,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival applications already submitted to the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, Serrano's packet will contain far more personal information than illegal immigrants are usually willing to provide — especially to the government.

"Nothing is for sure," Serrano said. "I'm afraid. What if the program is going to be killed, and then what happens with all the information I'm giving them? Are they going to turn around and come find me?"

On Aug. 15, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office began accepting applications from immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and who are seeking ways to remain in their adopted country.

The program does not grant them an avenue for citizenship or legal status, but will give them a driver's license and work permit and the assurance they won't be deported in the next two years if they maintain [the qualifications](#) that made them eligible for relief.

They must attend school or have completed high school or obtained a GED, or have served in the military.

They had to have been brought to the U.S. before the age of 16 and must not be over 30.

Those who are applying must provide documentation of each eligibility requirement.

A criminal record will mean a rejection, but government officials who review the applications will have the final say to determine if evidence to support the other requirements is sufficient.

"It would be wrong to think that anyone who looks like they fit will (easily) walk on the other side of the process with an approval," immigration attorney Laura Lichter said.

Applicants must also prove they were in the country on June 15, the day the program was announced.

"If I asked you to prove you were here on July 4th, you might be able to remember," Lichter said. "You might have been at a barbecue or some party, but if I just ask you for some random Tuesday?"

One of Lichter's clients was overjoyed when she remembered — and got proof — that she had returned a DVD to a Redbox in northern Colorado on June 15.

For Serrano, gathering school and medical records, and some bank records was easy enough. But proving he was in the U.S. between 2009 and 2010 — after he graduated from high school — has required more digging.

Pictures with a date on them, affidavits from trusted people who knew he was here, and the bus ticket that brought him into the country when he was almost 10 years old will be included in his application packet.

"From a legal perspective, the difficulty is that I can't screen someone and tell them 'Yes, you qualify'," Lichter said. "I can tell someone whether I think they will qualify, but we don't have case law."

For Serrano, the sting of the memory from the day his parents sat him down and told him they couldn't afford to send him to college — just two weeks before he planned to move into the dorms at University of Northern Colorado — makes the risk worthwhile.

"That was my dream and they took it away from me," Serrano said.

"But when I think about it," he added, "I really appreciate the sacrifice my parents made. It can't go to waste."

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