

Briefing Paper: Landscape of Federal Benefit Programs and State Oversight

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Overview of Education Benefits & Recent Changes

The Forever GI Bill

There were a number of updates that happened with the passage of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act. Below is a summary of some of the larger changes. For more information visit [here](#). Changes included:

- Elimination of 15-year Delimiting Date - There is no more 15 year limit to use GI Bill benefits for anyone who was discharged or released from active duty on or after January 1, 2013, as well as children of deceased service members who become entitled to Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits on or after January 1, 2013 and Fry spouses.
- Reinstatement of GI Bill benefits to students whose schools have closed - For students who had attended ITT and Corinthian, they can receive a full reinstatement of their benefits. For all other students, they can potentially receive up to a semester of their education benefits back.
- Expansion of GI Bill benefits to Purple Heart Recipients - Any Purple Heart Recipient on or after September 11, 2001 who was honorably discharged, is now eligible for 100% GI Bill benefits.
- Expansion of Yellow Ribbon - Purple Heart Recipients, Fry Scholars are now eligible for Yellow Ribbon. On August 1, 2020, Active Duty Service members will also be eligible for Yellow Ribbon.
- STEM Scholarship - Students pursuing some STEM fields are eligible to apply for an extra 9 months of GI Bill benefits.
- The Housing allowance is now calculated based on the location of the campus the student is attending and not the main campus location. Students can go onto the GI Bill comparison tool to calculate their housing allowance to see if it has changed at all.

The Yellow Ribbon Program

This program helps supplement some of the higher costs at out-of-state-schools, private institutions of higher learning, or graduate schools. Institutions of higher learning can enter into an agreement with VA, where VA will match the same amount of money a school will give its students receiving GI Bill benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)

VR&E provides support for job training for qualifying veterans with a disability rating to include support for post-secondary education leading to employment. A student must be pursuing a program of study specific to their line of work they plan to pursue after their training is complete.

Other (Montgomery GI Bill, etc.)

Some students might qualify for other VA education benefits such as the Montgomery GI Bill. Service members can elect to pay into these benefits when they begin active duty. These benefits are not necessarily as generous as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but for some students they might offer the better education benefit.

School Certifying Official (SCO) Training and Support Networks

Professional Support Networks

The National Association of Veterans Programs Administrators (NAVPA) offers a variety of support, training, and networking opportunities for SCOs. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs also provides regular online training and outreach. There are often regional groups or state group, such as the Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists, that offer training and opportunities to network.

State Approving Agencies

SAA's are the gateway to the GI Bill and serve as the first line approval authority for any program of education approved to accept VA education benefits. In order for any college or university to accept GI Bill and other Veterans Affairs education benefits they must be approved by their SAA.

Recommended Ratio of SCO/enrolled beneficiary

Given the amount of effort and time it takes to certify students, it is important for each school to take that into consideration and designate an appropriate ratio of SCOs to students based on workload and internal resources.

U.S. Department of Education

Totally and Permanently Disabled (TPD) Student Veteran Loan Forgiveness

Students can still be eligible for Title IV funds if they had taken the discharge in the past, but their discharge loans are subject to be reinstated and they will not be able to have those loans discharged again unless their medical condition significantly deteriorates and is documented by a doctor.

Loan deferment for deployed students

Students who are deployed, i.e. receiving hazardous duty pay or imminent danger pay, are eligible for automatic interest free deferment of their federal student loans when they are deployed. It's important to educate students who are getting ready to leave about their options so they can track their loan status with their loan servicer.