

EDUCATION BENEFITS

This section describes education benefits that may be available from both federal and state governments for surviving family members.

Federal Benefits

What federal education benefits are available?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA), which provides education and training opportunities for eligible dependents of a service member. The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits that may be used for a high school diploma or GED, college, graduate school, business, technical or vocational courses, certificate programs, apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

Who is eligible for DEA benefits?

The child or spouse (who has not remarried) of the following is eligible:

- (1) A veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled as the result of a disability arising from active military service;
- (2) A veteran who died from any cause while rated permanently and totally disabled from a service-related disability;
- (3) A service member listed for more than 90 days as missing in action or captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or
- (4) A service member listed for more than 90 days as forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power.

How is eligibility determined?

The VA determines eligibility based on the information contained in the required application. Persons deemed eligible will receive a Certificate of Eligibility, following submission of an application for benefits, showing the length of time they are eligible to receive education benefits and how many months of benefits they may receive. Under some circumstances, a beneficiary may choose between possible beginning dates. In such an event, the VA will generally notify the applicant of the possible beginning dates and ending dates based on the application.

For more information on VA educational programs, contact the VA at (888) GIBILL 1 or visit the VA website at www.gibill.va.gov.

How much is paid?

Benefits vary depending on the type of educational facility attended and whether the attendee is enrolled full-time or otherwise. Rates in effect since October 1, 2004 range up to \$803 per month for full-time enrollees in eligible colleges and vocational schools.

Checks are normally sent at the beginning of each month for the previous month's activity. Payments for on-the-job or apprenticeship training are not released until after a monthly report of hours worked is processed. If fewer than 120 hours are worked in a month, less than a full benefit payment is made. Payments for correspondence courses are made each calendar quarter after a certification of lessons completed is processed.

How long does eligibility for the benefits last?

Sons and daughters of deceased service members are generally eligible for education benefits from age 18 to age 26. Surviving spouses generally must use any available DEA benefits within 20 years from the first date of eligibility, as discussed above. Before December 10, 2004, surviving spouses had 10 years to use the benefits from the first date of eligibility.

What is the application process for educational benefits?

Those who wish to enroll in the program must obtain a VA Form 22-5490, Application for Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance. The school or training program must certify to the VA an applicant's enrollment in the educational program before DEA benefits will be paid.

Prospective applicants should discuss the application process with the school or training facility official who certifies enrollment for DEA benefits. The school officials to contact may be in any one of the following offices: financial aid, veterans affairs, registrar, admissions or counseling. For on-the-job training or apprenticeships, the official may be in the training, finance or human resources department.

The completed form must be sent to the VA Regional Office that covers the location where the training or education will take place. The appropriate regional office is listed on the form. Children under legal age must obtain the signature of a parent or legal guardian.

In order to qualify for DEA benefits, an educational program must be approved by a state approving agency. Contact the school's Financial Aid Office or the training facility employment office (if seeking aid for a job training program), or contact the VA, to find out whether an educational program qualifies.

To determine the current benefit payment rates under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA), visit www.gibill.va.gov/education/rates.htm.

The Application for Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance, VA Form 22-5490, can be found at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-5490.pdf or obtained by calling (888) GIBILL-1. The school or training facility may also have a copy of the form.

For a state-by-state listing of all VA facilities, visit www1.va.gov/directory/guide/allstate.asp.



For more information about how DEA benefits may effect DIC benefits for children of a deceased servicemember, visit the GI bill website at www.gibill.va.gov/education/c35pam.htm.

The application for tutorial assistance, VA Form 22-1990t, is available at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-1990t.pdf.

The application for work-study benefits, VA Form 22-8691, is available at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-8691.pdf.



What if the program does not qualify?

If the program does not currently qualify and has not requested approval from a state approving agency before, an official at the school or training facility may be able to contact the VA to request approval. The VA will refer the official to the appropriate State Approving Agency (SAA).

Does receiving DEA benefits affect other benefits?

For surviving spouses, DEA benefits have no effect on Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). Please see the section on General Financial Assistance for discussion of DIC benefits.

Children between ages 18 and 23 of a deceased service member are eligible to receive DIC benefits so long as they continue attending a VA-approved school. If they are also eligible for DEA benefits, they must elect which type of benefit to receive. If DEA benefits are elected, the death benefits will stop once DEA benefits are provided. Eligible children are entitled to receive up to 45 months of DEA benefits. However, an eligible child may receive no more than 48 months of combined DEA and DIC benefits. As a consequence, if an educational program lasts longer than 45 months, it may be beneficial to defer DEA benefits while receiving DIC benefits.

What other education-related benefits are available?

Financial reimbursement for tutors and work-study benefits are also available. The application for tutorial assistance should be made on VA Form 22-1990t, Application and Enrollment Certification for Individualized Tutorial Assistance.

Any student receiving VA education benefits who attends school at least three-quarters of the time may be eligible for work-study benefits, including employment at the school veterans' office, VA Regional Office, VA medical facilities or approved state employment offices. Work-study students are paid at the state or federal minimum wage, whichever is greater. The application for work-study benefits should be made on VA Form 22-8691, Application for Work-Study Allowance.

State Benefits

Are any state benefits available?

Yes, many states offer free tuition to state-sponsored institutions of higher learning, such as state universities, to eligible applicants, while other states offer subsidized, rather than free, tuition.

Whom should a surviving family member contact about state benefits?

Surviving family members should contact the state's veterans affairs office, which will often oversee military service-related education benefits for the state. However, some states administer their education

benefits through a higher education agency instead of the state veterans affairs office.

For information about the specific benefits offered by each state, please visit the websites listed for each state in the section on State Resources. Not every state currently has an education benefits program.

Scholarships

Are there any scholarships available?

There are many scholarships available for dependents of service members, and a scholarship specifically designed for the surviving family members of deceased veterans. Each scholarship has its own set of criteria to determine eligibility.

A number of military-related organizations maintain web-based listings with general and military-dependent specific scholarship information. The following table provides contact information for a few of those organizations, in addition to a selection of organizations that provide military-only scholarships:

Reserve Officers Association

In addition to offering scholarship and loan programs to the families of its members, the Reserve Officer Association maintains a list of military dependent scholarships and scholarships for the children of deceased service members generally.

Phone: (800) 809-9448

Website: www.roa.org/roal/roal_detail.asp?id=806

Military.com

Military.com is a commercial, service-related organization that maintains a website offering a scholarship search function for dependents of service members as well as state-by-state education benefits listings.

Website: www.military.com

Scholarships for Military Children

Scholarships for Military Children is a scholarship program that was created by the Defense Commissary Agency. Scholarships for Military Children maintains a website that provides information on and applications for scholarships funded through the manufacturers and suppliers whose products are sold at military commissaries around the globe.

Phone: (888) 294-8560

Website: www.MilitaryScholar.org



Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society maintains a website for information on and applications for educational grants offered and administered by the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society.

Phone: (703) 696-4960

Website: www.nmcrs.org

Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation

The Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation website provides information on and applications for scholarships offered by the Foundation to the sons and daughters of current or former United States Marines, and to the children of current or former United States Navy Corpsmen who have served with the United States Marine Corps.

Phone: New Jersey Office - (800) 292-7777

Virginia Office - (703) 549-0060

Website: www.marine-scholars.org

Air Force Aid Society

The Air Force Aid Society provides need-based grants of up to \$1,500 to selected sons and daughters of current, former, and deceased Air Force personnel. The Air Force Aid Society website provides information on and applications for the education grants offered by the Society.

Phone: (800) 429-9475 or (703) 607-3072

Website: www.afas.org/body_grant.htm

Society of Daughters of the U.S. Army (DUSA) Scholarship Awards Program

The DUSA website provides information on applications for DUSA scholarships, which are offered to daughters or granddaughters of CWOs or officers of the U.S. Army who died on active duty.

Website: www.odedodea.edu/students/dusa.htm

Army Emergency Relief

In addition to providing information on and applications for scholarships provided by the Army Emergency Relief to the spouses and children of deceased Army personnel, the Army Emergency Relief also maintains a listing of general financial aid links and scholarship search engines.

Phone: (866) 878-6378 or (703) 428-0000

Website: www.aerhq.org/education.asp

