

Veterans and Military Student Best Practices

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Micaela Black, VetSuccess Coordinator, Micaela.black@va.gov

Rebecca Ryan, RI State Approving Agency Program Manager, Rebecca.Ryan@ripoc.edu

Agenda

- Review VA benefits and how they work
- Role and responsibilities of certifying officials
- Best practices for maintaining compliance
- Role of State Approving Agencies
- Brief overview of debt management
- Update on Forever GI Bill
- Virtual tour of VAONCE

Snapshot: How VA benefits work

- Step 1: Student applies for benefits
- Step 2: Student brings Certificate of Eligibility (COE) to the school and requests enrollment certification.
- Step 3: The School Certifying Official (SCO) certifies student enrollment dates and tuition information to the VA.
- Step 4: The student (and the school when applicable) receive education benefit payments from the VA.
- Step 5 (if necessary): The SCO notifies the VA if the student drops a class, stops attending, or is no longer maintaining satisfactory progress.

VA Benefit Chapters: An overview

- Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) / Transfer of Entitlement / John D. Fry Scholarship
- Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (Chapter 30)
- Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606)
- Dependent's Educational Assistance (Chapter 35/DEA)
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (Chapter 31/VR&E)
 - Note: Not a GI Bill benefit but it will pay for veterans to receive education and training.
- Reserve Education Assistance Program (Chapter 1607/REAP)
 - Note: The program officially ended in Nov. 2015 but individuals who were using these benefits at that time and continue to use them will be eligible until 2019.

	Post-9/11 GI Bill/ Ch. 33	MGIB-AD/ Ch. 30	MGIB-SR/ Ch. 1606	DEA/ Ch. 35	VR&E/Ch. 31
Minimum Length of Service	90 days active aggregate service (after 9/10/01) or 30 days continuous if discharged for disability	2 yr. continuous enlistment (minimum duty varies by service date, branch, etc.)	6 yr. commitment (after 6/30/85)	Not applicable	Eligibility evaluated by counselor, have to have documented 10% service connected disability and need retraining.
Maximum # of Months of Benefits	36	36	36	45	48 (Can be exceptions, as determined by VR&E Counselor)
How Payments Are Made	<p>Tuition and Fees: Paid to school</p> <p>Housing stipend: Paid monthly to student</p> <p>Books & Supplies: Paid to student per credit at the beginning of the term, up to \$1,000 per year</p>	Paid to student. Amount of benefit based on Training Time.	Paid to student. Amount of benefit based on Training Time.	Paid to student. Amount of benefit based on Training Time.	<p>Tuition & Fees: School bills the VA Voc Rehab Office directly via invoice.</p> <p>Housing stipend: Paid monthly to student</p> <p>Books & Supplies: School Bookstore bills VA Voc Rehab Office directly via invoice</p>
Duration of Benefits	Generally 15 years from last day of active duty	Generally 10 years from last day of active duty	Ends the day you leave Selected Reserve	Spouse: 10 - 20 years Child: Ages 18-26	12 months from last date of discharge or ate veteran is notified of disability rating. Can be exceptions, as determined by VR&E Counselor

Transfer of Entitlement Under PGIB

- Department of Defense determines if an individual can transfer entitlement to one or more dependents
- Dependents eligible to receive entitlement include spouses and natural, adopted, or step-children. Must apply for benefits in their own name with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs.
- Transferees use entitlement in the same manner as the veteran. Changes to transferred entitlement can be made at any time by the veteran.
- Eligibility percentage levels may change with additional active duty service.
- Dependents file VAF 22-1990E to receive benefits.

Note: The fact that DoD permitted a transfer of entitlement to occur does not guarantee Chapter 33 benefits can be paid.

Post 9/11 GI Bill/Ch. 33 Eligibility

The Post 9/11 GI Bill has eligibility tiers based on length of qualifying active duty service after September 10, 2001.

Aggregate length of creditable active duty service after 09/10/01	Percentage of maximum amounts payable
At least 36 months ¹	100
At least 30 continuous days (Must be discharged due to service-connected disability)	100
At least 30 months, but less than 36 months ¹	90
At least 24 months, but less than 30 months ¹	80 ³
At least 18 months, but less than 24 months ²	70 ³
At least 12 months, but less than 18 months ²	60
At least 6 months, but less than 12 months ²	50
At least 90 days, but less than 6 months ²	40

¹ Includes entry level and skill training.

² Excludes entry level and skill training.

³ If the service requirements are met at both the 80 and 70 percentage level, the maximum percentage of 70 must be applied to amounts payable.

Post 9/11 GI Bill Payments- State Schools

- The Post 9/11 GI Bill will pay up to the entire cost of in-state tuition and applicable fees at a public school, depending on a student's eligibility level.
 - Ex. Student covered at 100% will have 100% of T&F covered
 - Ex. Student covered at 50% will have 50% of T&F covered
- Note: Changes to federal law in 2014 require that all veterans and active duty members be charged in-state rates. Check with your state approving agency to determine individual state policies.
 - Ex: In RI, all active duty military and GI Bill eligible veterans are charged in-state rates regardless of residency. Dependents using GI Bill benefits must also be charged in-state rates provided that they live in the state while attending school (on or off campus housing is permissible.)

Post 9/11 GI Bill Payments- Private Institutions of Higher Learning

Eligibility Tier	Max T&F Payable/Year
100%	\$22,805.34
90%	\$20,524.81
80%	\$18,244.27
70%	\$15,963.74
60%	\$13,683.20
50%	\$11,402.67
40%	\$ 9,122.14

In general, VA will pay the lesser of the net T&Fs or the individual's annual cap rate for all Ch33 students



Yellow Ribbon Program

- VA will match each additional dollar that an institution contributes toward an eligible student's established charges, not to exceed 50% of unmet allowable charges above the annual cap at private schools or to cover out of state charges at public schools.
- Voluntary agreement between the VA and the school. The school is able to set the dollar amount as well as the number of students to be awarded. (Students must be awarded on first come, first serve basis.)
- Only individuals entitled to the 100 percent benefit rate (based on service requirements) may receive this funding.
- Active duty personnel and their spouses are NOT eligible for Yellow Ribbon.
- Funds used by the institution as Yellow Ribbon contributions become part of the veterans education benefit and cannot be included as estimated financial assistance (EFA).

John D. Fry Scholarship

- Eligibility for children or spouses of an active duty member killed in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001.
- Will receive tuition & fees payments, monthly housing allowance and the books & supplies stipend at the 100% rate under PGIB.
- Beginning August 2018, will also be eligible for Yellow Ribbon funding where available.

Responsibilities of the School Certifying Official (aka SCO)

- Must report all enrollments and any changes to enrollment within 30 days
- Must be able to monitor financial aid use by Post 9/11 GI Bill students and be able to identify scholarships, grants, and any other aid that a PGIB student receives.
- Must be able to distinguish mandatory fees and report such fees for Post 9/11 GI Bill students.

Reporting Tuition- Net Charges

- VA will pay the actual **net** cost for tuition and fees charged per term.
- The net cost can only be charged (and reported to VA) after an assessment has been made by the school, identifying any and all waivers, scholarships, grants or other benefits that would cause a reduction in tuition and fees for the student during the term being certified.
- This includes any scholarship(s), or other Federal, State, institutional or employer-based aid or assistance (**other than loans and any funds provided under section 401(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Title IV)**) that is provided to the institution and is specifically designated for the sole purpose of defraying tuition and fees.
- VA should be considered *last payer*

Reporting Tuition: Example

For each enrollment period, report actual net cost for tuition & fees to VA:

Fall Tuition	= \$20,000.00
Semester Fee	500.00
Late Registration Fee	25.00
Merit Scholarship (General Cost of Education)	(2,500.00)
Private Tuition-Specific Scholarship	(1,000.00)
Pell Grant (Title IV Fund)	(5,000.00)
<hr/> Net Tuition and Fees	<hr/> = \$19,500.00

Report \$19,500.00 to VA as the net T&Fs for this term.

Student has excess balance of \$7,475 after late fee has been paid. Can be used to cover any housing related items or returned as a refund.

Role of Certifying Official (cont'd)

- Must monitor:
 - Unit subjects pursued and certify only courses that apply to the student's current program.
 - Student's grades to ensure (s)he is making satisfactory progress and report unsatisfactory progress (or course withdrawals.)
 - Student's conduct and report when student is suspended/dismissed for unsatisfactory conduct.
- Must ensure that ledgers contain all debits and credits, and that all are clearly identified.
- Must administer and monitor the Yellow Ribbon program at schools that participate.
- Must maintain all records related to the certification, payment and progress of students receiving VA Education Benefits.

Best Practices for Maintaining Compliance

- Establishing Enrollment Certification Timelines
- Suggested Reports
- Relationships within your institutions
- Record Maintenance
- Student Interactions

Enrollment Certification Timelines

- **Before the start of the term-** submit initial enrollments
 - Ideally should do this around 30 days before the start of the term to ensure prompt book and housing payments for students.
- **After Add/Drop Ends-** check final enrollment and tuition amounts for accuracy, report changes as needed.
- **Monthly after term begins-** check for course withdrawals and report changes as needed.
- **End of term-** check once more for course withdrawals and report changes and graduation as needed.
- *Note- if your school does a lot of petitions or post-term grade changes, may also want to establish check to catch late withdrawals.*

Suggested Reports

- **Report identifying which students are using veterans benefits**
- Report identifying which veterans benefits students are registered each semester
- Report comparing total # of registered credits to total # of certified credits
- **Report identifying which veterans have dropped or withdrawn from courses throughout the semester**
- Report identifying which veterans are on academic probation
- Report identifying which veterans have graduated

Relationships within your institution

- Maintain a close relationship with Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid and any other school entity that can provide the information needed for certifying.
- Maintain a close relationship with veteran and dependent students in receipt of benefits such that they are aware of the school's reporting and monitoring responsibilities and their own responsibilities.
- Establish procedures to monitor attendance of students in receipt of VA Education Benefits to avoid overpayments of benefits.
- Establish procedures such that the SCO is notified of any changes in a student's enrollment, financial aid, tuition and fees or any other change that would impact their Education Benefits.
- Utilize available resources to assist the SCO: the VA Work-Study program, campus Veterans Clubs or Organizations, VA Annual Reporting Fees, etc.

Compliance Surveys & Record Maintenance

- All schools with actively enrolled veterans may be subject to a compliance survey from either the VA or your SAA.
- Schools should maintain records for at least three years following the student's last date of attendance.
- What to maintain:
 - Copies of VA paperwork & certifications that you submit.
 - Your school's transcript, grade reports, tuition payment/refund records, records of tuition & fee payments from other sources (& full identification of those sources on a detailed payment ledger), drop slips, registration slips (for those courses dropped during drop/add), transcripts from previous schools with evaluations of same, student's school application, records of disciplinary action, program outline (to track proper courses taken), enrollment agreement, degree audits, etc.

Student Interactions

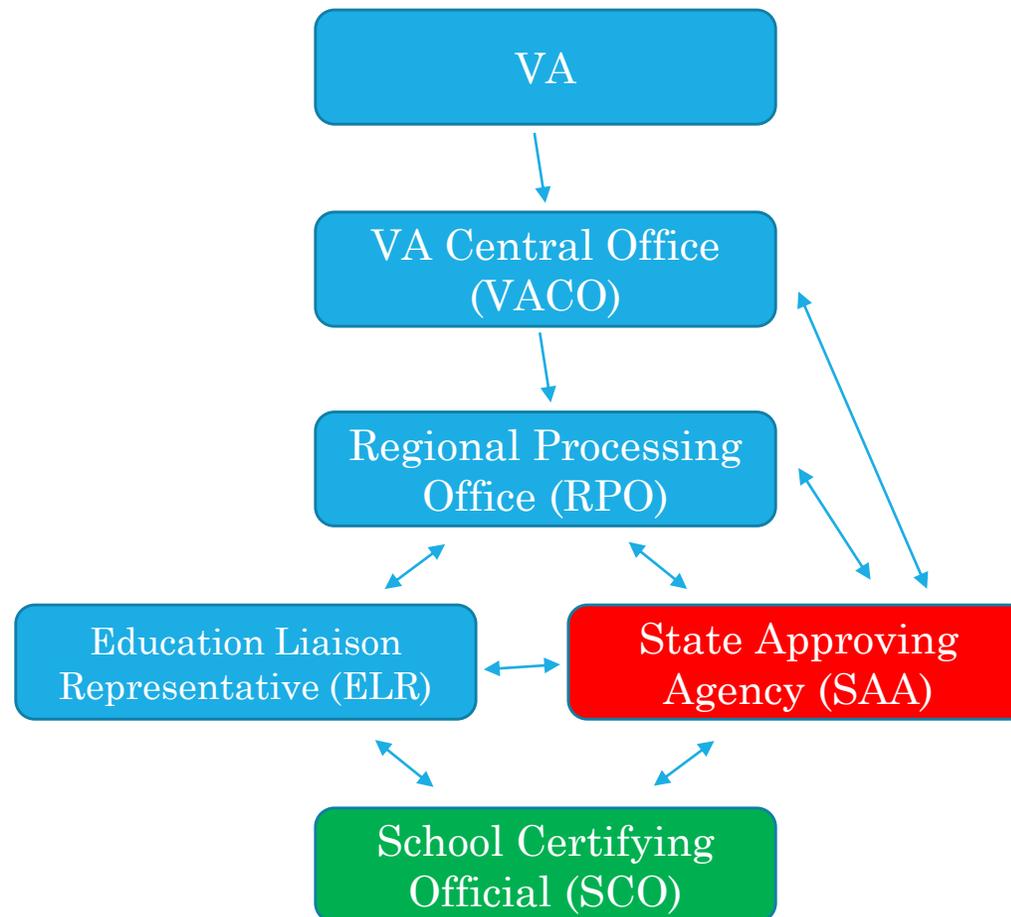
- The more, the better!
- SCOs should be able to:
 - Direct students how to apply for VA benefits
 - Provide basic information about the types of benefits available and how the payments work for each benefit
 - Direct students to other available resources (i.e. GI Bill website, eBenefits, GI Bill Hotline (1-888-442-4551), VetSuccess, SAA)
- Ideally, SCOs should be main point of contact on campus for veterans and act as liaison for other resources. Veterans tend to respond best to one person, particularly during the early transition back to campus life. If the SCO can guide them through departments, that transition often goes much more smoothly.

Role of State Approving Agencies (SAAs)

- Approvals
 - Evaluate educational programs- both degree and certificate- for approval.
 - Provide written evaluations and approvals to VA and the schools.
 - A student will not be paid benefits in a program if the approval request hasn't been submitted by the SAA.
- Inspections and Compliance Survey Visits
 - Visit and inspect each active educational institution.
 - Assist VA with compliance surveys to ensure institutional compliance for approved courses and programs.
- Technical Assistance
 - Respond to institutional and veteran requests for information and assistance.

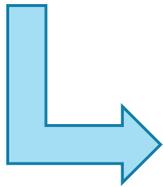
Role of the SAAs (cont'd)

- SAAs & VA collaborate to help the schools:
 - Interpret laws and regulations
 - Maintain integrity of programs
 - Train the SCOs
 - Encourage greater use of VA benefits
 - Help your school better serve veterans!
- Visit www.nasaa-vetseducation.com/Contacts to find your SAA's contact information!

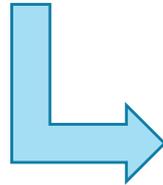


VA Debt Management- Process Overview

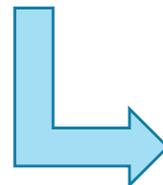
School certifies term and receives payment from VA Regional Office in Buffalo.



VA in Buffalo receives notice of enrollment change and subsequent overpayment.



VA in Buffalo creates debt and sends notification letter to the school and debt info to DMC.



Debt Management Center (DMC) receives debt and begins collection process with school.

What Creates School Debt?

- Key to remember is “on or before the first day of classes.”
- Student never attended classes
- Student completely withdrew on or before the first day
- Student passed away during or before the term started
- School received a duplicate payment, incorrect payment, or payment for the wrong student.
- School has to update tuition & fees and is due less than originally requested- will owe balance back.

Making Payment to Debt Management Center

- Never return money until letter from Debt Management Center has been received
- Always include the DMC payment stub from the bottom of the debt letter with your payment.
- Sending a payment in too soon or without the identifying stub will delay application of payment.
- Debt Management Center will send 3 notices total over 120 days. Payments not received in that timeframe will be referred to Treasury Offset Program (TOP.)

Student Debts

- A student debt will occur when a student drops or withdraws any time after the first day of the term.
- Students can work with the Debt Management Center to pay in full, request a waiver, agree to reduced benefits to pay back debt, create a payment plan, or dispute the claim.
- Schools should refund students according to their refund plan (even if the payment was received from the VA) and encourage students to apply those funds once his/her debt letter is received.
 - Schools may issue payments on behalf of the students with unspent tuition balance but must have either the remittance stub from the student debt letter or a letter specifically stating that the school wants to pay the student debt.

Contact Information for DMC

- For disputes or inquiries:
 - E-mail to dmcedu.vbaspl@va.gov is preferred method. Should include student and school identifying information (SSN & facility code) and detailed explanation.
 - Toll-free Call Center:
 - 1-800-827-0648
 - 1-612-970-5782 (fax)

What's new: Forever GI Bill

- *Formally known as the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017; passed by Congress and signed into law in August 2017.*
- Extends full eligibility to Purple Heart recipients, effective August 2018
- Extends Yellow Ribbon Program to Fry Scholarship and Purple Heart recipients, effective August 1, 2018
- Restores benefits wasted at schools that unexpectedly closed; effective 90 days after passage of bill and applies to any closures after January 1, 2015.
- Eliminates current 15 year time limitation to use GI Bill for service members discharged on or after January 1, 2013, effective immediately.

What's New: Forever GI Bill (cont'd)

- **BAH to Reflect Real Housing Location- effective August 2018**
 - Currently, living stipends are paid based on where the school is located.
 - Moving forward, payments will be calculated based on where the student attends the majority of classes.
 - SCOs will need to factor this in to certifying and need access to schedules.
- **Fifth Year STEM Scholarship- effective August 2019**
 - VA is authorized to grant scholarships to veterans who are at least halfway through a STEM degree and anticipate running out of entitlement prior to completion. Will pay up to 9 additional months of PGIB benefits, up to a maximum of \$30,000.
- **Reports on GI Bill Program- effective immediately**
 - Secretary of VA is now required to submit annual reports from educational institutions regarding student performance.
- **SCO Funding**
 - Annual reporting fee will increase to \$16 per veteran. All schools with more than 100 GI Bill beneficiaries will be required to establish a specific account tracking the fees to be used specifically for the implementation of the GI Bill.

What's New: Forever GI Bill (cont'd)

- SCO Funding- effective August 2018
 - Annual reporting fee will increase to \$16 per veteran. All schools with more than 100 GI Bill beneficiaries will be required to establish a specific account tracking the fees to be used specifically for the implementation of the GI Bill.
- SCO Training- effective August 2018
 - VA and SAA required to provide requirements for training for SCOs and allows the VA to disapprove a course of education if the school does not ensure that the SCO meets the training requirements.
- School View of Remaining GI Bill Months- effective August 2018
 - VA must give schools the ability to view the remaining benefit amount for each veteran attending that institution. Veteran will option to opt-out if they do not want the school to have access.

Please be sure to fill out the
session evaluation at:
neacrao.org/feedback

Thank you!



Tour of VAONCE

https://vaonce.vba.va.gov/vaonce_student/default.asp

