

VETERAN VOC REHAB,
EMPLOYMENT AND
EDUCATION BENEFITS



Veterans News Network

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I. Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)

VR&E provides services to eligible Servicemembers and Veterans with service connected disabilities and employment handicap, to help them prepare for, obtain, and maintain suitable employment. For Veterans and Servicemembers with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, VR&E provides services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. Additional information on VR&E benefits is available at www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab.

a) VR&E Eligibility for Veterans:

A Veteran must have a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 20 percent with an employment handicap or a rating of 10 percent with a serious employment handicap, and be discharged or released from military service under other than dishonorable conditions.

b) VR&E Eligibility for Servicemembers:

Servicemembers are eligible to apply if they expect to receive an honorable discharge upon separation from active duty, obtain a rating of 20 percent or more from VA, obtain a proposed Disability Evaluation System (DES) rating of 20 percent or more from VA, or obtain a referral to a Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES).

c) VR&E Entitlement:

A vocational rehabilitation counselor (VCR) works with the Veteran to determine if an employment handicap exists. An employment handicap exists if a Veteran's service-connected disability impairs his/her ability to prepare for, obtain, or maintain suitable career employment. After an entitlement decision is made, the Veteran and VRC work together to develop an individualized rehabilitation plan. The individualized rehabilitation plan outlines the rehabilitation services to be provided.

d) VR&E Services:

Based on their individualized needs, Veterans work with a VRC to select one of five tracks to employment. The Five Tracks to Employment provide greater emphasis on exploring employment options early in the rehabilitation planning process, greater informed choice for the Veteran regarding occupational and employment options, faster access to employment for Veterans who have identifiable and transferable skills for direct placement into suitable employment, and an option for Veterans who are not able to work, but need assistance to lead a more independent life. If a program of training is selected, VA pays the cost of the approved training and services (except those coordinated through other providers) that are included in an individual's rehabilitation plan, including subsistence allowance.

e) Five Tracks to Employment:

i. Reemployment with Previous Employer

This track is for Veterans who served on active military service or in the National Guard or Reserves, and are now returning to employers for whom they worked prior to going on active duty.

ii. Rapid Access to Employment

This track is for Veterans who express a desire to obtain employment as soon as possible and already have the necessary skills to qualify for competitive employment in a suitable career.

iii. Self-Employment

This track is targeted to Veterans who have limited access to traditional employment, need flexible work schedules, or need a more accommodating work environment due to their disabling conditions or other life circumstances.

iv. Employment through Long-Term Services

This track is targeted to Veterans who need long-term services, such as remedial or refresher courses, specialized training, and/or post-secondary education, to obtain and maintain suitable employment.

v. Independent Living Services

This track is for Veterans who are not currently able to work due to the effects of their disability, and services are needed to improve their independence in daily living.

f) Length of a Rehabilitation Program:

The basic period of eligibility in which VR&E benefits may be used is 12 years from the later of the following: 1) A Veteran's date of separation from active military service, or 2) The date VA first notified a Veteran that he/she has a compensable service-connected disability. Depending on the length of program needed, Veterans may be provided up to 48 months of full-time services or the part-time equivalent. Rehabilitation plans that only provide services to improve independence in daily living are limited to 30 months. These limitations may be extended in certain circumstances.

g) Employment Services:

VR&E staff assists Veterans and Servicemembers with achieving their employment goals by providing job development and placement services, which include: on-the-job training, job-seeking skills, resume development, interviewing skills and direct placement. VR&E has partnerships with federal, state and private agencies to provide direct placement of Veterans or Servicemembers. VR&E can assist with placement using the following resources:

i. On the Job Training (OJT) Program

Employers hire Veterans at an apprentice wage, and VR&E supplements the salary up to the journeyman wage (up to maximum allowable under OJT). As the Veterans progress through training, the employers begin to pay more of the salary until the Veterans reach journeyman level and the employers are paying the entire salary. VR&E will also pay for any necessary tools. Employers are also eligible for a federal tax credit for hiring an individual who participated in a vocational rehabilitation program.

ii. Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE)

The NPWE program provides eligible Veterans the opportunity to obtain training and practical job experience concurrently. This program is ideal for Veterans or Servicemembers who have a clearly established career goal, and who learn easily in a hands-on environment. This program is also well suited for Veterans who are having difficulties obtaining employment due to lack of work experience. The NPWE program may be established in a federal, state, or local (i.e. city, town, school district) government agencies only. The employer may hire the Veteran at any point during the NPWE.

iii. Special Employer Incentive (SEI)

The SEI program is for eligible Veterans who face challenges in obtaining employment. Veterans approved to participate in the SEI program are hired by participating employers and employment is expected to continue following successful completion of the program. Employers may be provided this incentive to hire Veterans. If approved, the employer will receive reimbursement for up to 50 percent of the Veteran's salary during the SEI program, which can last up to six months.

The Veterans Employment Center (www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs) is the federal government's single authoritative online source for connecting transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans, and military families with meaningful career opportunities with both public and private-sector employers. Job seekers can use the site to translate their military skills into civilian skills that employers can understand, post a public resume that is searchable by employers, and conduct a job search for both public and private-sector positions. Employers can use the site to post job opportunities, search verified resumes, make public commitments to hire Veterans, and obtain additional hiring and employment resources. All referral links direct job seekers to the employer's website and their unique job application system.

II. Post-9/11 GI Bill Yellow Ribbon FAQs

The following are Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) concerning the Yellow Ribbon Program. In addition to these FAQs and benefits of the Yellow Ribbon Program, you may also find the general FAQs available at the main page <http://www.gibill.custhelp.com> useful as well.

1. What is the Yellow Ribbon Program? How will it benefit me?

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a provision of the law that created the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Yellow Ribbon Program is available for Institutions of Higher Learning (degree granting institutions) in the U.S. or at a branch of such institution located outside the U.S. The program allows approved institutions of higher learning and the VA to partially or fully fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the established thresholds under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

2. If I am eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, am I automatically eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program?

No. Only Veterans (or dependents under Transfer of Entitlement) at the 100% benefit level qualify. Active duty members and spouses thereof are not eligible for this program. In addition, the institution must be approved to participate in the program, and you must apply to the school.

3. How do I know whether the school I want to attend participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program?

More information about the program and the lists of participating Yellow Ribbon schools are posted on the GI Bill website at:

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post911gibill/yellowribbonprogram.html>

4. If the school I plan to attend participates in the program, can I count on being in the program?

No. The school's agreement with the VA may limit the number of participants in the program and is determined on a first-come, first-served basis. You must apply to the school. The school will notify each student accepted into the Yellow Ribbon Program.

5. If the school I plan to attend participates in the program, do all participants receive the same amount of Yellow Ribbon Program benefits?

Not necessarily. Schools have the flexibility to designate the number of students and contributions based on student status (undergraduate, graduate, doctoral) and college or professional school. For example, the school could specify \$1,000 for undergraduates, \$1,500 for graduate students and \$2,000 for doctoral students. The school also could specify \$1,800 for students in the school of engineering and \$2,500 for students in the school of nursing.

6. If I participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program this year, will I automatically be in the program next year?

Not necessarily. Yellow Ribbon Program agreements must be in effect for each year. A school with an approved agreement with VA must continue to offer it to you in subsequent years as long as the following conditions apply:

- The school continues to participate in the program;
- You maintain satisfactory progress towards completion of your program;
- You remain continuously enrolled (per school's policy); and
- You have remaining entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

If you transfer to another school, the new school would have to participate in the program and accept your application; the first school's decision has no bearing on the second school.

7. If I participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program this year, will I automatically be guaranteed the same matching contributions from the school and VA for subsequent years (provided the above conditions still apply)?

No. The school may choose to contribute a different amount for subsequent years.

8. Will all of my tuition and fees be paid for if my school participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program?

Not necessarily. The school's agreement with the VA specifies an amount the school will contribute (and VA will match) to make up all or part of the difference between what the Post-9/11 GI Bill will pay and the unmet tuition and fees charges. In addition, the school's agreement with the VA may specify only certain colleges and/or professional schools, and/or undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral level programs. The list of schools on the website will include specific information on each school's agreement with VA.

9. What happens when a portion of my tuition and fees is already met through state or institutional waivers?

The amount of tuition and fees charged, minus any aid specifically designated for the sole purpose of defraying tuition and fees, will be used to determine the amount payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The unmet charges may be covered in part or entirely through equal Yellow Ribbon Program contributions from the school and VA

10. What fees will be covered by Yellow Ribbon Program funds?

All mandatory fees for a student's program of education may be included. Any fees that are not mandatory, such as room and board, study abroad (unless the study abroad course is a requirement for the degree program), and penalty fees (such as late registration, return check fees, and parking fines) cannot be included. These fees are not payable under the Yellow Ribbon Program or under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

11. Do I have to attend full-time to be in the Yellow Ribbon Program?

No. You do not have to attend full-time.

12. How will I know for sure that I am eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program? What is the process to apply?

If you submit an application for the Post-9/11 GI Bill to VA and are eligible at the 100% benefit level, VA will issue you a Certificate of Eligibility advising that you are potentially eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program. You should provide your Certificate of Eligibility to the school which, in turn, will determine if there are slots available for the Yellow Ribbon Program (based on its agreement with the VA). If your school has already sent us an enrollment certification, and it is processed at the same time as your application, your award letter will also display your benefit level. The school is responsible for notifying you whether or not you are accepted and approved for the Yellow Ribbon Program. The school then submits an enrollment form to VA, certifying information that is used to make payment to the school for tuition and fees and for Yellow Ribbon Program payments.

13. How would I know if the school I am attending would discontinue its participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program for subsequent years?

The school must inform its students of discontinued participation.

14. Can I receive Yellow Ribbon Program funds for the summer term?

Yes, if the school still has Yellow Ribbon Program funds available for the per-student maximum contribution for summer term.

15. If I reduce my course load, how will my payments change?

The contributions from the school and VA would be reduced. Refunds are based on the school's refund policy, and you would be liable to VA for any resulting overpayments.

16. If I leave my school but return after a semester, am I still approved for the Yellow Ribbon Program?

The school must continue to offer the Yellow Ribbon Program to you provided that the school continues to participate in the program, you maintain satisfactory progress, and you remain continuously enrolled. The definition of continuous enrollment is dictated by the school's policy and determines your continued eligibility for the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Detailed information about the Yellow Ribbon Program is available at

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post911gibill/yellowribbonprogram.html> for students, and at

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/school-certifying-officials/yellow-ribbon-agreement/index.html> for school officials.

For more information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, call toll-free 888-GIBILL-1 (888-442-4551), or visit the VA GI Bill Website at www.gibill.va.gov

III. VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC)

The VSOC program is designed to assist Veterans as they make the transition to college life. Through the VSOC program, VR&E is strengthening partnerships with institutions of higher learning and creating opportunities to help Veterans achieve success by providing outreach and transition services to the general Veteran population during their transition from military to college life.

The VSOC program provides VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor assigned to each VSOC school to provide vocational testing and career, academic, and readjustment counseling services, and a VA Vet Center Outreach Coordinator, co-located on many campuses, to provide peer-to-peer counseling and referral services.

VSOC counselors ensure that Veterans receive the support and assistance needed to pursue their educational and employment goals.

IV. Scholarships:

a) Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship:

The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship provides Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits to the children and surviving spouses of Servicemembers who died in the line of duty after September 10, 2001. Eligible beneficiaries attending school may receive up to 36 months of benefits at the 100% level. NOTE: Fry Scholarship beneficiaries are not eligible for Yellow Ribbon Program benefits. The Fry Scholarship includes:

- Full tuition and fees paid directly to the school for all public school in-state students. For those attending private or foreign schools, tuition and fees are capped at a statutory maximum amount per academic year.
- Monthly housing allowance
- A books and supplies stipend

i. Eligibility:

Children of active duty members of the Armed Forces who died in the line of duty after September 10, 2001, are eligible for this benefit. A child may begin an approved program of education before the age of 18. Eligibility ends on the child's 33rd birthday. A child's marital status has no effect on eligibility. Eligible children:

- Are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100-percent level
- Have 15 years to use the benefit beginning on their 18th birthday

- May use the benefit until their 33rd birthday
- Are not eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program

Surviving spouses of active duty members of the Armed Forces who died in the line of duty after Sept. 10, 2001, are eligible for this benefit. A surviving spouse's eligibility generally ends 15 years after the Servicemember's death. A spouse will lose eligibility to this benefit upon remarriage.

V. Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD)

The MGIB-AD (Chapter 30) is an education benefit that provides up to 36 months of education benefits to eligible Veterans and Servicemembers for college degree and certificate programs, technical or vocational courses, flight training, apprenticeships or on-the-job training, high tech training, licensing and certification test, entrepreneurship training, certain entrance and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. Benefits generally expire 10 years after discharge. Current payment rates are available at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/.

A Veteran may be eligible for this benefit if he or she entered active duty after June 30, 1985, has an honorable discharge, did not decline MGIB in writing, and served three continuous years of active duty (or have an obligation to serve four years in the Selected Reserve after active duty service.) There are exceptions for disability, re-entering active duty, and upgraded discharges. All participants must have a high school diploma, equivalency certificate, or have completed 12 hours toward a college degree before applying for benefits.

VI. How does a school get a program approved for GI Bill benefits?

State Approving Agencies (SAA) are generally responsible for the approval of education and training programs in their states. They are the pathway into VA for a program's recognition and identification as being eligible for education benefits.

Colleges, universities, and other training establishments seeking to provide VA eligibility should begin by contacting their SAA. For a listing of all SAAs, please click here:

<http://www.nasaa-vetseducation.com/Contacts.aspx>