



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance

What Is Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance?

Survivors' and Dependents' Education Assistance (DEA) is an education benefit for eligible spouses and children of certain Veterans.

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, also known as the "Forever GI Bill," was signed into law on Aug. 17, 2017. It brings significant changes to Veterans' education benefits. The new law changes the amount of entitlement new eligible individuals will receive under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program from 45 months to 36 months. This change applies to individuals who first enroll in programs of education after Aug. 1, 2018. Individuals who first enrolled in a program of education prior to Aug. 1, 2018, would still qualify for a maximum of 45 months of entitlement.

Eligible people can receive full-time or equivalent benefits for:

- College, business, technical or vocational courses
- High school diploma or GED
- Independent study or distance learning courses
- Correspondence courses (spouses only)
- Apprenticeships or on-the-job training
- National exams (e.g. SAT, LSAT, GRE, GMAT)
- Remedial, deficiency and refresher training (in some cases)
- The costs for necessary licenses and certifications

Log on to the GI Bill website at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/index.asp>. Here, you can find out if a program is approved for VA educational benefits. Click on the "Choosing

a School” tab. Search for approved education and job training programs using VA’s WEAMS Institution Search Tool at <https://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do>.

Who Is Eligible?

To be eligible for DEA, you must be the son, daughter or spouse of:

- A Veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled because of a service-connected disability
- A Veteran who died from any cause while the service-connected disability was in existence
- A Service member missing in action or captured in the line of duty by a hostile force
- A Service member forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power
- A Service member hospitalized or receiving outpatient care for a VA-determined service-connected permanent and total disability

When Can This Benefit Be Used?

Generally, spouses and surviving spouses have 10 years to use this benefit. The 10 years begins on the date the VA establishes DEA eligibility. Spouses and surviving spouses remain eligible for 20 years if VA rates the Veteran permanently and totally disabled with an effective date of three years from discharge. Surviving spouses of Service members who died while on active duty also have 20 years from the date of the Service member’s death to use the benefit.

Children can use the benefit between the ages of 18 and 26.

Note: These time limits can be extended under certain circumstances. Call 888-442-4551 for details.

How Much Does VA Pay?

The amount VA pays is based on the type of training program. It's also based on whether the individual attends part-time or full-time. Benefits are paid monthly and in arrears, or at the end of the course of study. If attendance is less than a month or less than full-time, payments will be reduced. Find current payment rates on our website.

How Can You Apply?

Find an approved VA training, and apply online at <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/vonapp.asp>.

For more information, call 888-GI-BILL-1, or visit the website: <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/>.