

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

VA Program Helps Make College More Affordable

(NAPSA)—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin accepting applications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill on May 1, 2009. This Bill is a new education benefit for veterans, military members, reservists and National Guard members who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001. By law, the new benefit is effective Aug. 1, 2009.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive educational assistance program authorized since the original GI Bill of Rights was signed into law in 1944. It provides eligible individuals with tuition payments to assist them in getting a college education. For many participants, it also provides a housing allowance while they're studying and a stipend for books and supplies.

Who Is Eligible?

Individuals may be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill if:

- They served an aggregate of at least 90 days of active duty after September 10, 2001;
- They were honorably discharged from active duty due to a service-connected disability and served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001;
- They are a dependent eligible for Transfer of Entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on an individual's service under the eligibility criteria listed above. However, the Department of Defense will decide who can transfer benefits, and the individual must be a member of the armed forces in order to transfer entitlement.

Did You Know?

The Department of Veterans



The Post-9/11 GI Bill makes a college education more affordable for veterans.

Affairs will begin accepting applications for the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 on May 1, 2009. Applications will be available at www.gibill.va.gov. The Post-9/11 GI Bill makes a college education more affordable for veterans.

Benefit Features

Based on length of creditable active-duty service, individuals may be entitled to a percentage of the following:

- ✓ Cost of tuition and fees, not to exceed the most expensive in-state undergraduate tuition at a public institution of higher education;
- ✓ Monthly housing allowance equal to the basic allowance for housing payable to a military E-5 with dependents. The amount of the housing allowance is based on the ZIP code of the school and is not payable to individuals training at half-time or less or those pursuing training solely by distance learning;
- ✓ Yearly books and supplies stipend of up to \$1,000 per year; and individuals may also be eligible for a one-time payment of

\$500 if they are relocating from a highly rural area.

Yellow Ribbon Program

In addition, the Yellow Ribbon Program—a provision of the Post-9/11 GI Bill—allows institutions of higher learning (IHLs) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The institution may contribute up to 50 percent of those expenses and VA will match the amount.

Elections

Individuals who are currently eligible for another VA education program and want to switch over to the new benefit must make an irrevocable election to do so. This election must be in writing and state which benefit is being given up and the effective date of the election.

Why College?

The benefits of a college education go beyond monetary rewards. According to a report by the Carnegie Foundation, college attendance has been shown to decrease prejudice, enhance knowledge of world affairs and enhance social status. Research has also consistently shown a positive correlation between completion of higher education and good health, not only for oneself, but also for one's children.

Individuals interested in receiving the Post-9/11 GI Bill should submit an application for benefits, even if they are currently eligible for another VA education benefit. Applications will be available at www.gibill.va.gov.