

CHAPTER 1

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The transition from military to civilian life includes assessing and evaluating your options for future success, but keep in mind that success often depends on having the right education or training credentials. If you have not evaluated your education status and options, now is the best time to start.

The resources available to you may reside on the nearest active component installation, within your RC unit or in your local community. Much of what is available on the installation depends on the type and duration of your active duty orders. Another factor is the geographical location of your duty. If you are mobilized, you may be based in a CONUS support role or you may be forward-deployed. Every RC member must be aware that all of the above factors play roles in obtaining assistance. However, do not assume that because you are on short-term active duty orders you cannot seek assistance, or that the programs are established only for active duty members. Educational and training staff, are more than ready to assist you or give you advice on where to obtain assistance. Be proactive and seek these resources out for assistance.

Once you return to your community, you will want to examine specific educational and training options that are available—which can be local, state, or federal. Your active duty period(s) may qualify you for many programs previously not available to you (e.g., Post 9/11 Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)).

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

GUIDANCE COUNSELING

Before you release from active duty, go to your local Education Center where counselors can help you determine your education goals. If you think you need additional education or training, an education counselor will guide you to the appropriate curriculum and institution and help you with the paperwork necessary to enroll in an academic or vocational program.

CAREER ASSESSMENT

A counselor can also recommend aptitude tests or vocational interest inventories to help clarify your career goals. These tests can help you pinpoint job skills in which you might excel and then relate them to specific occupations and careers in the civilian world. Some tools include: The “Strong Interest Inventory,” “Self-Directed Search,” or “Career Assessment Inventory,” as well as computerized counseling systems like “Discover.” These can help you select jobs and careers that more closely match your personality, background, and career goals.

ACADEMIC PLANNING

In order to achieve your career goals, you may need more formal education requisites than you currently possess. Counselors can also advise you on non-traditional educational opportunities that can make it easier for you to get a diploma, vocational certificate, or college degree. These non-traditional opportunities include the following:

- » “Challenge exams,” such as a college-level equivalency exam. You can convert knowledge learned outside the classroom into credits toward a college program, which can save you time and money.
- » Attending school part time while continuing to work full-time.
- » Collaborating with the veterans’ coordinator at the college, university, or vocational school of your choice to explore the various VA educational benefits that might lead to programs specific to your needs.
- » Determining if your military learning experiences can translate to course credit.
- » Taking advantage of distance learning opportunities. Today’s technological advances enable you to enroll in educational programs in which courses are offered by accredited educational institutions in a variety of multimedia and electronic remote formats.

TESTING

Some colleges and universities require test results as part of the application process. Installation Education Centers normally provide testing services, which include:

- » **Vocational interest inventories** help you identify careers that are most likely to interest you.
- » **Academic entry exams** include the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Testing (ACT), or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and are offered only a few times each year.
- » **Credit by examination** is an exam program that can lead to college credit. If you score high enough on a specified exam, you may be exempt from taking a certain class or course requirements. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP), which provides up to 30 college credits and the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) are also offered free to Service members on active duty.
- » **Certification examinations** help translate military training into civilian terms. Examinations are available in many skill areas, and upon successful completion you receive certification that documents your skills in equivalent civilian occupational standards.

FACTS AND ADVICE

VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFITS

The VA administers and provides financial assistance to several veterans’ education programs. Included are college degree programs, technical and vocational programs, correspondence courses, flight training courses, and on-the-job training (OJT) and apprenticeship programs. In order for a program to be eligible for VA funding, it must be accredited by a state-approving agency.

Programs for which VA financial assistance is available are the Post-Vietnam-era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP), the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) and the Post 9/11 GI Bill. As a rule, the benefits under VEAP and MGIB must be used within 10 years of separation from active duty. You have 15 years to use Post-9/11 benefits.

Post-Vietnam-Era Veterans' Education Assistance Program (VEAP)



ELIGIBILITY

With the exception of few veterans who signed delayed entry contracts before January 1, 1977, VEAP is for those veterans who first entered active duty between January 1, 1977 and June 30, 1985, and who made a contribution to a VEAP account before April 1, 1987. Service members who participated in VEAP but withdrew their contributions may start new allotments or make lump-sum contributions at any time while they are on active duty.

Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)



ELIGIBILITY

With the exception of some officers commissioned after December 31, 1976, the MGIB is for those Service members and veterans who came on active duty on July 1, 1985, or later and who did not decline—in writing—to participate in the MGIB program.

To be eligible for the full 36 months of MGIB benefits, veterans must normally meet the character of service and minimum length of service requirements. Some veterans who are separated from active duty early for the convenience of the government may also receive the full 36 months of MGIB benefits. Depending on the reason for separation, other veterans who are separated from active duty early may be eligible for reduced MGIB benefits, prorated based on length of active duty; one month of benefits for each full month of active duty.

Some veterans who were eligible for the Vietnam Era GI Bill (VRA) have increased MGIB eligibility. They must have had some remaining VRA entitlement on December 31, 1989, when all benefits under the VRA expired. With some exceptions, they must have served on active duty from July 1, 1985 through June 30, 1988. For these veterans, the 10-year period of time in which they must use MGIB benefits is reduced by any time, from January 1, 1977 through June 30, 1985, that they were not on active duty.

Individuals who are involuntarily separated from the military and who were not originally eligible for the MGIB may have a second opportunity to receive MGIB benefits. This includes officers not normally eligible for the MGIB because they were commissioned after December 31, 1976 as a result of graduating from a service academy or after completing a ROTC scholarship, and people who declined to participate in the MGIB. Contact your Education Center or VA for details.

\$600 Buy-Up Program

For every \$20 you contribute, you can receive an additional \$5 on your monthly MGIB full-time rate. If you're eligible for the maximum 36 months of MGIB benefits, contributing the total \$600 will increase your total benefit by \$5,400.

GI Bill Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programs

When training on a new job, you can receive benefits from the VA in conjunction with your salary while you are enrolled in the program. You will receive approximately:

75% *of the full-time benefit for each full month of training during the first six months of training.*

55% *of the full-time benefit for each full month of training during the second six months of training.*

35% *of the full-time benefit for each full month of training during the remainder of the training.*



ELIGIBILITY

If you are qualified for the MGIB or the Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) and you have or are planning to start a new job or apprenticeship program, you can apply for this benefit. In some cases, the VA will even pay retroactively for OJT from the past 12 months.

Post 9/11 GI Bill

The Post 9/11 GI Bill is an education benefit program that provides Service members, Veterans, and some dependents with college tuition and stipends for housing and books. This program went into effect August 1, 2009 and applies to college courses taken after July 30, 2009.



ELIGIBILITY

To qualify, you must serve a minimum of 90 days on active duty after September 10, 2001. This includes active duty service as a member of the Armed Forces or as a result of a call-up or order to active duty from a reserve component (National Guard and Reserve) under certain sections of Title 10 or Title 32.

Effective August 1, 2009 but not payable until October 1, 2011, qualifying service expands the Post 9/11 GI Bill to include Active Service performed by National Guard members under title 32 USC for the purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the National Guard; or under section 502(f) for the purpose of responding to a national emergency.

Benefits under the Post 9/11 GI Bill vary depending on a Service member's state of residence, number of education units taken, and amount of post September 11, 2001 active duty service. The total percentage of benefits eligibility aligns with active duty service as follows:

100% 36 or more cumulative months

100% 30 or more consecutive days with disability-related discharge

90% 30 or more cumulative months

80% 24 or more cumulative months

70% 18 or more cumulative months

60% 12 or more cumulative months

50% 6 or more cumulative months

40% 90 or more days

Some periods of active duty service are excluded. Periods of service under the following do not count toward qualification for the Post 9/11 GI Bill:

- » National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Public Health Service (PHS), or Active Guard Reserve
- » ROTC under 10 USC 2107(b)
- » Service academy contract period
- » Service terminated due to defective enlistment agreement
- » Service used for loan repayment
- » Selected reserve service used to establish eligibility under the MGIB (MGIB chapter 30), MGIB-SR (MGIB-SR Chapter 1606), or the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP chapter 1607).

Transferability of Post 9/11 GI Bill Benefits

In order to transfer this benefit to one's dependents, the Service member must "elect" the Post 9/11 GI Bill, at which time all benefits under the MGIB are forfeited.

- » Transferability became effective August 1, 2009, and for those in the PHS and NOAA, the effective date is August 1, 2011.
- » Service Secretaries have approval authority for transferability (it is NOT a guaranteed entitlement).



ELIGIBILITY

To transfer benefits, the Service member must be in the Armed Forces on or after August 1, 2009.

- » Members who separate from active duty, or who leave the Selected Reserve prior to this date are ineligible to submit an application.
- » Members who retire or transfer to the Retired Reserve prior to this date are ineligible to submit an application.
- » Members must have completed *at least six years of service* in the Armed Forces and agree to serve *four* more years in the Armed Forces from the date of application in order to transfer benefits.



ELIGIBILITY

Applicability applies to any member serving in the Armed Forces on or after August 1, 2009, or in the PHS and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration after August 1, 2011, who:

- » Has served a minimum of six years of service in the Armed Forces (active duty and/or Selected Reserve) and agrees to serve an additional *four* years in the Armed Forces, or
 - » Has served more than 10 years of service in the Armed Forces (active duty and/or Selected Reserve) and is precluded by standard service or Department of Defense (DoD) policy (e.g., High Year Tenure, Reduction in Force) from completing the full four year obligation, and agrees to serve such additional time up to the service-specific policy, or is or will become eligible to retire, transfer to Fleet Reserve or Transfer to the Retired Reserve during the period of August 1, 2009 through August 1, 2013 and agrees to serve the additional period, if any, as specified below. (A Service member is considered retirement eligible if he or she has completed 20 years of active Federal service, or 20 qualifying years of service for Selected Reserve).
- » Transfer of benefits may be to a spouse, child, or a combination of both, as reported via Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS). The following rules apply:
 - Service members can add dependents, revoke or change election while in the Armed Forces.
 - Service members can *only* revoke or make election changes after leaving the Armed Forces; they cannot add dependents.
 - Veterans may transfer up to 36 months of educational benefits or remaining entitlement months if benefits are already used prior to conversion from another educational program.
 - This benefit is not considered in any property settlement resulting from a divorce.
 - In Dual Military Couples, both Service members may transfer benefits to dependents.
 - Child must enroll full-time in school and Member must update DEERS with this information.
 - Spouse may use benefits immediately if the Service member has completed a minimum of six years of service in the Armed Forces. A child may use benefits after the Service member has completed 10 years of service in the Armed Forces.



ELIGIBILITY

Period of Benefit

- » **Spouse:** Up to member's 15 year delimiting date
- » **Child:** From age 18 up to age 26 (regardless of member's 15 year delimiting date)

Must have received High School Diploma, General Education Development (GED), or equivalent, or reached age 18.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Federal Student Aid is an office of the U.S. Department of Education and offers billions of dollars in financial aid to help millions of students manage the cost of education each year. There are three categories of federal student aid:

- » Grants
- » Work-study
- » Loans

Even if you are still on active duty, you can apply for financial aid such as Pell Grants or Federal Stafford Loans.



See the **Resources** section of this chapter for website and phone numbers.



ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for federal student aid is based on financial need and several other factors. The financial aid administrator at the college or career school you plan to attend will determine your eligibility. Generally, eligible applicants:

- » Demonstrate financial need (except for certain loans—your school can explain which loans are not need-based).
- » Have a high school diploma or a GED certificate; pass a test approved by the U.S. Department of Education; meet other standards your state establishes that the Department approves; or complete a high school education in a home school setting that is treated as such under state law.
- » Be working toward a degree or certificate in an eligible program.
- » Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen.
- » Have a valid Social Security Number (unless you're from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau).
- » Register with the Selective Service, if required. Maintain satisfactory academic progress once in school.
- » Certify that you are not in default on a federal student loan and do not owe money on a federal student grant.
- » Certify that you will use federal student aid only for educational purposes.

VA Benefits and Federal Student Aid

Veterans' educational benefits can still be used in conjunction with Federal Student Aid. The application includes this query, which the school will take into account when computing and preparing your aid package.

Family Members

Federal Student Aid provides a tool called *FAFSA4caster*, which is designed to help students and their families plan for college. The *FAFSA4caster* provides students with an early estimate of their eligibility for federal student financial assistance. Military dependents that are enrolled in college and are eligible to receive Pell Grants should check out two new programs: Academic Competitiveness Grants and National Sailor and Marine ACE Registry Transcript Grants (National SMART Grants).

READMISSION TO POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

The College Affordability and Opportunity Act, commonly referred to as the Higher Education Act, guarantees readmission rights for Service members. An institution of higher education may not deny readmission to a Service member who was a student but had to leave the institution to serve in the uniformed services. Furthermore, the Service member must be promptly readmitted with the same academic status.



ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for readmission, the Service member must have served voluntarily or involuntarily in the Armed Forces, National Guard, or Reserves on active duty, or on active duty for training or full time National Guard duty under Federal Authority, for more than 30 consecutive days.

An otherwise eligible Service member qualifies for readmission if:

- » The institution is given notice of absence for service
- » The cumulative length of absences does not exceed five years
- » The student gives notice of intention to return to school

The institution is not required to readmit the Service member if:

- » The institution determines that the student is not prepared to resume the study where the Service member left off
- » There are no reasonable efforts the institution can take to prepare the student to resume or complete the program of study



THE VETERANS UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM (VUB)

The VUB Program is a free U.S. Department of Education program designed to help eligible veterans refresh their academic skills so that they can successfully complete the college program of their choosing.

The VUB Program services include:

- » Basic skills development, which is designed to help veterans successfully complete a high school equivalency program and gain admission to college education programs
- » Short-term remedial or refresher classes for high school graduates that have put off pursuing a college education
- » Assistance with applications to the college or university of choice
- » Assistance with applying for financial aid
- » Personalized counseling
- » Academic advice and assistance
- » Career counseling
- » Assistance in getting veterans services from other available resources
- » Exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and other educational activities not usually available to disadvantaged people

The VUB program can improve skills in:

- » Mathematics
- » Foreign Languages
- » Composition
- » Laboratory Science
- » Reading
- » Literature
- » Computer Basics
- » Tutorial and Study Skills Assistance
- » Any other subjects you may need for success in education beyond high school



ELIGIBILITY

To participate in VUB, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- » Be a U.S. military veteran with 181 or more days of active duty service and discharged on/after January 31, 1955, under conditions other than dishonorable
- » Meet the criteria for low income, according to guidelines published annually by the U.S. Department of Education, and/or be a first-generation potential college graduate
- » Demonstrate academic need for VUB
- » Meet other local eligibility criteria as noted in the local VUB Program's Approved Grant Proposal, such as county of residence, etc.



JOB CORPS—HELPING VETERANS START NEW CAREERS

Job Corps is a program for those separating Service members who need to develop additional job skills. At Job Corps, you can train for a new and rewarding career alongside other veterans. After training, staff will work with you to find a job for up to 21 months.

Job Corps offers hands-on training to eligible veterans through the age of 24 in America's fastest-growing careers. Each year Job Corps provides training and support services to more than 100,000 young people in more than 100 career areas at 123 centers across the nation. Job Corps training for veterans is absolutely FREE. Throughout your training, you will receive a basic living allowance. As your training progresses, your living allowance

will increase. Job Corps can also help you get started after you graduate with a transition allowance. This allowance is based on your academic and career skills achievement while in Job Corps.



WHAT DOES JOB CORPS OFFER TO VETERANS?

Veterans receive priority enrollment at all Job Corps centers. While you may attend any Job Corps center in the nation, there are three centers that offer dorm areas exclusively for veterans. You will be living among other veterans who are also transitioning from the military to civilian life. Those centers are:

- » Atterbury Job Corps Center—Edinburgh, Indiana
- » Earle E. Clements Job Corps Center—Morganfield, Kentucky
- » Excelsior Springs Job Corps Center—Excelsior Springs, Missouri

For a map of all centers, visit www.recruiting.jobcorps.gov.



WHAT HAPPENS AT JOB CORPS?

While most of your time on center will be devoted to career training, you may spend some time taking academic classes. When you arrive you will be required to take a test to assess your academic skill level. Although you already have your high school diploma or GED, you may need to take additional classes in subjects such as math and English to prepare you for your career area.

You will have the chance to train with Job Corps employer partners on actual work sites. Job Corps has partners in every corner of the country who are looking for qualified people to train and hire.



STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA (SVA)

Founded in 2008, Student Veterans of America is a coalition of student veterans groups on college campuses across the United States. SVA has two major components: the executive staff and student veteran groups.

SVA member chapters are student groups that have formed on college and university campuses to provide peer-to-peer networks for veterans who are attending those schools. These groups coordinate campus activities, provide pre-professional networking, and generally provide a touchstone for student veterans in higher education. Each local group plays a critical role in ensuring that every veteran is successful after their service.

For a map of all chapters across the United States, visit www.studentveterans.org.

RESOURCES

DoD VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

For separating Service members, the DoD Voluntary Education Program (VEP) website offers a wide variety of educational information of interest and use. The website was originally established to provide support for military education center staffs worldwide and later expanded to provide direct support to active and Reserve Component Service members and families. This support includes information on all programs provided by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support (DANTES) including the Distance Learning Program, Examination Program, Certification Program, Counselor Support Program, Troops to Teachers, and a wide variety of educational catalogs and directories.

Links are provided to each of the services' education programs and to a wide variety of education-related resources. There is also a Directory of Education Centers on the website, which contains information on all of the services' education centers worldwide, including postal addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

The primary goal of the website is to provide information for Service members to select, plan, and complete their program of study, either while on active duty or upon separation.

DoD VEP website: apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=VOLED:HOME:0

TRANSCRIPTS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SPECIFIC TO MILITARY SERVICE

Army

The Army's Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS) automatically captures your military training, Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and college-level examinations scores with the college credit recommended.

AARTS website: aarts.army.mil

Navy and Marines

The Navy and Marine Corps use the Sailor and Marine ACE Registry Transcript (SMART) system. This system automatically captures your training, experience and standardized test scores.

SMART website: <https://smart.navy.mil/smart/welcome.do>

Air Force

The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) automatically captures your training, experience, and standardized test scores. Transcript information may be viewed on the website.

CCAF website: www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf

Coast Guard

The Coast Guard Institute (CGI) requires each Service member to submit documentation of all training (except correspondence course records), along with an enrollment form, to receive a transcript.

CGI website: www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi

Veterans

Under most circumstances, veterans are eligible to use their former service branch's transcript program. However if you are not eligible for AARTS, SMART, CCAF, or CGI systems, you will need to fill out DD Form 295, "Application for the Evaluation of Learning Experiences during Military Service" and provide your DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty," to receive credit for your experience.

MGIB ELIGIBILITY

MGIB eligibility can be complex. If you have questions about MGIB eligibility, check with your Education Center, or call the VA toll-free education number, 1-888-GI Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551). You may also get information at the VA Education Service website www.gibill.va.gov.

- » **\$600 Buy-Up Program:** Use DD Form 2366-1, "Increased Benefit Contribution Program," to process your request through your local payroll or personnel office: www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/eforms/dd2366-1.pdf.
- » GI Bill Apprenticeship and OJT Programs: Call 1-888-GIBILL-1 to speak to a VA representative about your eligibility.

POST 9/11 GI BILL

Learn more about the Post 9/11 GI Bill by downloading the VA Post 9/11 GI Bill Pamphlet (PDF) at: www.gibill.va.gov/pamphlets/CH33/CH33_Pamphlet.pdf.

EDUCATION BENEFITS COUNSELING

The VA can provide you with educational counseling after you leave the Service. Contact the VA GI Bill Regional Processing Office by dialing toll-free 1-888-GI Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551) or go to the GI Bill website at www.gibill.va.gov.

Information on veterans' educational benefit programs is available from your installation's Education Center or from the admissions office and/or veterans' coordinator at most colleges and universities.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov

Application

You can apply online or in writing by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Get further instructions on the application process at www.fafsa.ed.gov. You may also apply for a Federal Student Aid Personal Identification Number (PIN) which allows you to sign your application electronically at www.pin.ed.gov.

You can register with the Selective Service electronically or in writing. For more information, visit www.sss.gov or call 1-847-688-6888. (TTY users can call 1-847-688-2567.)

READMISSION TO POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

For more information, go to www.dantes.doded.mil.

THE VETERANS UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM (VUB)

For more information, as well as a link to individual program locations, visit: www.navub.org.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MORAL, WELFARE, AND RECREATION (MWR) LIBRARIES

Online resource to bring expert solutions to all Service members *and* their families to help them plan, prepare, and achieve their education and career goals. For more information, visit www.nelnetsolutions.com/dod.

JOB CORPS—HELPING VETERANS START A NEW CAREER

Visit www.recruiting.jobcorps.gov or call 1-800-733-JOBS.

LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION

There are several resources available to assist you in finding civilian requirements for licensing and certification:

- » America's Career Info Net—A Department of Labor (DOL) website. Go to the "Career Tools" section to look up licenses by state, requirements for licensing, and point-of-contact information for the state licensing board: www.acinet.org.
- » The DANTES website has information on certification programs: www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/danteshome.asp.
- » Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)—Find civilian credentials related to your military occupational specialty, learn what it takes to obtain the credentials, and see if there are available programs that will help pay credentialing fees: <https://www.cool.army.mil> or <https://www.cool.navy.mil>.
- » CCAF Credentialing and Educational Research Tool (CERT)—CERT is a valuable resource for Air Force personnel. The purpose of CERT is to increase awareness of professional development opportunities applicable to Air Force occupational specialties. CERT includes information related to specific Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs), such as:
 - Civilian occupation equivalencies (DOL)
 - CCAF degree programs
 - National professional certifications
 - Certification agencies
 - Certification exams by DANTES
 - Professional organizations

For more information, visit: www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/certifications.asp.

VOCATIONAL SERVICES

Installation Education Centers have information regarding vocational and technical school programs designed to give you the skills needed to work in occupations that do not require a four-year college degree. Education Center Counselors can also show you how to get course credits for non-traditional learning experience (such as military certifications and OJT). The counselors may also help you find out about certification and licensing requirements (i.e., how to get a journeyman card for a particular trade). Local trade unions may also offer vocational training in fields of interest.