



My Next Steps:

Education Benefits for Transitioning Military Families: Resources for Information and Assistance



Question

Where can my family find assistance to help us understand our eligibility for education benefits and learn how to apply for the education benefits earned through our service member's military service?



Answer

Your service member and your family have sacrificed a great deal in service to our country. One way the military rewards you for that sacrifice is through an investment in your family's future in the form of education benefits. Many education benefits are available only to your service member; however, some education benefits are extended to eligible spouses and dependent children. Military-related education benefits provide a path to a more rewarding future with greater opportunities for advancement and higher wage-earning potential for your entire family. While some military-related education benefits are designed to be used during your service member's time in the military, many benefits provide educational opportunities during transition and beyond. If your service member is planning to transition out of the military, there is time to take advantage of the education benefits your family has earned.

If you live near an installation, visit the education center early in your transition planning to learn about available education benefits and programs. Education counselors or education service officers can help you and your service member identify education and career goals, and learn how to match those goals to no-cost or reduced-cost options for skills courses, tutoring, degree advancement, vocational and technical training, national testing services and more. Counselors can also help your service member understand his or her Joint Services Transcript, or JST, which can be a good tool for moving your service member towards an advanced degree or professional certification prior to transition from the military. Your service member may also learn about on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships and credentialing opportunities he or she may access

and use during the final months of active duty service to improve employment options upon transition. You can visit installation education centers in person or online while your service member is still active duty. Your family's eligibility for this resource may end, however, when your service member leaves the military.

“Military-related education benefits provide a path to a more rewarding future with greater opportunities for advancement and higher wage-earning potential for your entire family.”

The Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program also provides information and advice to help maximize education benefits and opportunities before and after transition from the military. Spouses are encouraged to attend transition training with their service members. During TAP training, you and your service member may elect the DoD Education Track. The in-depth training provides guidance in selecting programs of study, identifying military-friendly institutions, finding sources of educational funding and applying to schools or career technical training institutions. Service members and their spouses are eligible for TAP and the education-related training track up to two years prior to transition out of the military and for a limited time after leaving the military. Connect with the transition assistance office near you to learn about upcoming training opportunities.

Visit MySECO on Social Media



Resources at a Glance

- [Locate](#) an education counselor, education office or transition assistance office on your installation
- DoD [Transition Assistance Program - Accessing Higher Education Track](#)
- [Spouse Education and Career Opportunities](#)



Answer (cont.)

The Department of Veterans Affairs partners with the DoD to offer additional education benefits for eligible service members and, in some cases, their spouses or family members. Whether you need help understanding and maximizing GI Bill benefits or want to find out if your service member or you qualify for additional resources, such as vocational rehabilitation and employment services, speak to a veteran service officer or VA representative. VSOs and VA representatives can give your family personalized educational support and benefits coaching. If eligible, your family can access VA programs and services after transition from the military. However, speak with a VA representative at least six months prior to your service member's transition date in order to understand your benefits and meet eligibility and application timeline requirements. Be aware that many states also offer unique education benefits to service members, spouses, and their families. Be sure to check with the state VA office where you live now and where you will be moving if you plan to relocate after transition.

Other education-related organizations, including Student Veterans of America and VetSuccess on Campus, exist to help veterans and their family members succeed in reaching their educational goals through information, support, assistance and counseling. These organizations are located at the schools where you may be applying for

admission, and they can be good resources for information and assistance before, during and after transition from the military.

The DoD's Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program offers education assistance specifically for military spouses. Through SECO, you can expect personalized support to help you plan for and reach your educational goals. Resources include information and links to funding sources, online decision-making tools and one-on-one coaching from professional career coaches who understand your military life. As an eligible military spouse, you have access to SECO while your service member remains on active duty and for a limited time after transition out of the military.

Learning about education benefits available to you, doing what you can to advance your own education and training and encouraging your service member to do the same are worth the effort. Working towards degree advancement, graduation, licensing and certification, career skills training or on-the-job training may improve your family's chances for success after leaving the military. Explore and reach out to the many resources for information and assistance to help you navigate and maximize the many military and veteran education benefits your family has earned.



Steps to Consider

These "Steps to Consider" are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- Discuss the educational goals you, your service member and your children have set.
- Explore the DoD and VA websites listed in the Resources section to learn about the education benefits for which your service member, you and your children may be eligible.
- [Locate](#) your nearest installation education center and meet with an education counselor or education service officer to discuss your family's educational goals and to get help matching those goals to programs and benefits for which you may be eligible.
- Visit the [SECO website](#) and talk to a SECO career coach about your educational goals. Work with the career coach to create a plan.
- Incorporate the actions necessary to help you meet your educational goals into your family's transition plan and timeline. Some examples of these actions may include the following:
 - Complete assessments of your current education and training.
 - Schedule and take tests required for applications to desired schools or programs.
 - Request transcripts or other educational documents.
 - Research and apply to schools.
 - Apply for funding assistance, such as scholarships and grants.
 - Register for and complete courses.
- Research education benefits that provide financial support to help your service member, you and your children reach your educational goals. Begin by watching the Stepping Beyond video and downloading the My Next Steps fact sheets entitled, "Education Benefits for Transitioning Military Families – Resources for Financial Assistance" and "Education Benefits for Transitioning Military Families – The GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program."



Steps to Consider (cont.)

These “Steps to Consider” are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- If your active duty service member has at least six years of military service, he or she may be eligible to [transfer his or her GI Bill benefits](#) to you or your dependent child(ren). However, an additional four-year military commitment is required from the time of transfer. If your service member has not already transferred GI Bill benefits, talk to an education counselor or a [VA benefits advisor](#) immediately about options for transferring GI Bill benefits.
- As early as possible (up to two years ahead of your service member’s separation date), attend transition training with your service member either in person or [online](#). As part of the TAP curriculum, sign up for the DoD Education Track. More information may be available by visiting your [local](#) transition assistance office, or online through the [DoD TAP website](#).
- Research state education benefits for military members, their family members and veterans by contacting the [state veterans affairs office](#) where you currently live and where you may relocate after transition from the military.
- Ensure your service member has a premium [eBenefits account](#). This joint DoD/VA portal is where you can apply for and manage your VA education benefits. GI Bill benefits can also be managed on [milConnect](#).
- At the point your service member decides to use his or her GI Bill benefits or you or your children decide to use the benefits that your service member has transferred, meet with an [installation](#) education counselor, a [veteran service officer](#) or a VA benefits advisor at a [VA benefits office](#) for advice about maximizing this benefit.
- Seek information and advice from the veterans affairs or veterans services office at any school or technical training program to which you or your family members are considering applying. Representatives from [Student Veterans of America](#) and [VetSuccess on Campus](#) can also help answer your questions and provide support.



Resources

Military Voluntary Education Resources

- Branch-specific voluntary education websites:
 - Army: <https://www.goarmyed.com/>
 - Marine Corps: <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/services/education/voluntary-education/>
 - Navy: <http://www.navycollege.navy.mil/>
 - Air Force: <https://www.airforce.com/education>
- Joint Services Transcript website: <https://jst.doded.mil/official.html>
- Defense Activity Non-Traditional Education Support website: <http://www.dantes.doded.mil/>
- milConnect: <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>
- DoD TAP website: <https://www.dodtap.mil/index.html>
 - Standalone transition training for veterans and family members: <https://jko.jten.mil/courses/tap/TGPS Standalone Training/start.html>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Resources

- VA education and training benefits: <https://www.va.gov/education/> or call 1-888-442-4551 to reach the VA’s education call center.
- Veterans Benefits Administration education and training: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>
- eBenefits: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage>



Resources (cont.)

- VA benefits office locator: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?zoomLevel=4&page=1&address=&facilityType=benefits&serviceType>
- State veterans affairs offices: <https://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>

Military Spouse Education Resources

- Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Website: <https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil/portal/>

Personalized Educational Benefits Assistance

Locate an installation education counselor or education service officer: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose “I’m looking for a program or service.” Then, type in “Adult Education Centers” or “Spouse Education, Training and Careers” in the “I’m choosing from” text field. Next, you’ll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the “Search” button.

Locate a transition assistance office: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose “I’m looking for a program or service.” Then, type in “Transition Assistance Program” in the “I’m choosing from” text field. Next, you’ll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the “Search” button.
- SECO Career Coaches: <https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil/Portal/Home/SecoCounseling> or call (800) 342-9647.
- Veteran service officer locator: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search>
- VA benefits office locator: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?zoomLevel=4&page=1&address=&facilityType=benefits&serviceType>
- Student Veterans of America: <http://studentveterans.org/>
- VetSuccess on Campus: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/vsoc.asp>



Notes

Related MySTeP Topics

Benefits and Entitlements

- Education Benefits for Transitioning Military Families – Resources for Financial Assistance
- Education Benefits for Transitioning Military Families – The GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon Program
- eBenefits for Transitioning Military Families