

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance

Learn about the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program. If you're the child or spouse of a Veteran or service member who has died, is captured or missing, or has disabilities, you may be able to get help paying for school or job training through the DEA program—also called Chapter 35. Find out if you're eligible for this benefit.

Am I eligible for education benefits through the DEA program?

You may be able to get these benefits if both you and the Veteran or service member meet certain eligibility requirements.

One of these descriptions must be true for the Veteran or service member:

- The Veteran or service member is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability, **or**
- The Veteran or service member died in the line of duty, **or**
- The Veteran or service member died as a result of a service-connected disability, **or**
- The Veteran or service member is missing in action or was captured in the line of duty by a hostile force for more than 90 days, **or**
- The Veteran or service member was forcibly detained (held) or interned in the line of duty by a foreign entity for more than 90 days, **or**
- The service member is in the hospital or getting outpatient treatment for a service-connected permanent and total disability and is likely to be discharged for that disability

And one of these descriptions must be true for you:

- You're 18 years old or older, **or**
- You completed high school or secondary education

Note: If you're the child of a Veteran or service member, your marital status doesn't affect your eligibility for DEA benefits.

What if I qualify for both DEA and the Fry Scholarship?

You'll need to pick one or the other. Once you make this choice, you can't switch to the other program.

[Learn about the Fry Scholarship](#)

Exception: If you're the child of a service member who died in the line of duty before August 1, 2011, you can use both DEA and the Fry Scholarship and get up to 81 months of education and training. You'll need to use one program at a time.

Do I have age or time limits for using my DEA benefits?

It depends on when you became eligible for DEA benefits.

Children and spouses who can use DEA benefits at any time

You can use DEA benefits without age or time limits if you're eligible for benefits, and **one of these is true for you:**

- The event that qualified you for DEA benefits happened to the Veteran or service member on or after August 1, 2023, **or**
- You turned 18 years old on or after August 1, 2023, **or**
- You completed high school or secondary education on or after August 1, 2023

Children and spouses who have age and time limits for using DEA benefits

You have age and time limits for using your DEA benefits if all of these are true:

- The event that made you eligible for DEA benefits happened to the Veteran or service member before August 1, 2023, **and**
- You turned 18 before August 1, 2023, **and**
- You completed high school before August 1, 2023

If you're the child of a Veteran or service member

Your benefits start at age 18. You may use these benefits for 8 years (there may be exceptions).

Note: If you join the military, you can't use this benefit while on active duty. And if you want to use this benefit after you leave the service, you can't have a dishonorable discharge. Military service can extend your eligibility, but this extension usually ends when you turn 31 years old.

If you're the spouse of a Veteran or service member

Your benefits start on the date we determine that you're eligible or on the date of the Veteran or service member's death.

In most cases, your benefits end after 10 years.

If the service member died on active duty, your benefits end after 20 years.

If we rated the Veteran as permanently and totally disabled, with an effective date that's 3 years after discharge from active duty, your benefits end 20 years from that effective date in most cases.

Note: If you join the military, you can't use this benefit while on active duty. And if you want to use this benefit after you leave the service, you can't have a dishonorable discharge.

What benefits can I get?

We'll send you a monthly payment to help you cover the cost of these programs:

- College or graduate degree programs
- Career-training certificate courses
- Apprenticeships
- On-the-job training

You may also get educational and career counseling.

Note: If you use DEA benefits to pay for school or training that started before August 1, 2018, you may be able to get benefits for up to 45 months. If you started your school or training on or after August 1, 2018, you may be able to get benefits for up to 36 months.

[Check the current payment rates for DEA](#)

Where can I use DEA benefits?

You can use our GI Bill Comparison Tool to find out which schools and training providers we've approved.

[Use the GI Bill Comparison Tool](#)

Or if you're already enrolled in a program, contact the institution's certifying official to check if we've approved your program for VA benefits.

How do I get my monthly payment?

We'll send your monthly payment directly to you.

If you're enrolled in a non-college degree program, you'll need to verify your enrollment every month to get payments.

[Learn how to verify your enrollment for DEA benefits](#)

If you're enrolled in a college degree program, you don't need to verify your enrollment to get DEA benefits.

Can I get DEA and DIC benefits?

If you're the child of a Veteran or service member

If you're over 18 years old and using DEA, you can't get VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from us.

If you're the spouse of a Veteran or service member

You can get both DEA and VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments.

[Learn about DIC](#)

Can I get more help if I have a disability that prevents me from working toward my goals?

We may approve special restorative training, if needed, to help you overcome or lessen the effects of a physical or mental disability so you can work toward your educational or training goal. Or we may approve special vocational training you may need due to a physical or mental disability. These special benefits won't include medical or psychiatric care.