

Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program Fact Sheet

General Description and Purpose

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) is a Commonwealth of Virginia program which provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of military service in an armed conflict. Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard. Armed conflict includes military operations against terrorism or as the result of a terrorist act, a peace-keeping mission, or any armed conflict after December 6, 1941.

***NOTE:** A Veteran's 90-100% permanent disability must have been directly caused by the Veteran's involvement in: 1) military operations against terrorism; 2) a peacekeeping mission; 3) a terrorist act; 4) an armed conflict subsequent to December 6, 1941. The service connected disability cannot have been incurred during active duty that coincides with, but was not the direct result of, one of the listed events/missions.*

The purpose of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program is to provide undergraduate or other postsecondary education free of tuition and all required fees. A stipend to offset the cost of room, board, books, and supplies may also be available, contingent on funding. Benefits are available for up to four academic years.

Eligibility

The eligible student must be:

- 1) Accepted by and enrolled in a Virginia public college or university; and
- 2) a. A spouse of a qualifying military service member; or
b. A child, between the ages of 16 and 29, inclusive, of a qualifying military service member.

The qualifying military service member is one who meets at least one criterion in each of the following four areas.

- 1) **Served on active duty in:**
 - a. US Armed Forces;
 - b. US Armed Forces Reserve; or
 - c. Virginia National Guard.
- 2) **Must have total and permanent or at least 90% permanent service-connected disability that coincides with:**
 - a. Military operations against terrorism;
 - b. A peacekeeping mission;
 - c. Active duty as a result of a terrorist act; or
 - d. Any armed conflict subsequent to December 6, 1941.
- 3) **While serving active duty*:**
 - a. Was killed;
 - b. Was missing in action;
 - c. Was prisoner of war; or
 - d. Became permanently disabled or at least 90 percent disabled due to such service and is now a veteran.

** Please refer to the note listed under "General Description and Purpose"*

4) **Have one of the following qualifying statuses:**

- a. Virginia domicile at time of entering service or called up from reserves;
- b. Virginia domicile or physical presence in Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to student applying for admission to the institution;
- c. If deceased, was a Virginia domicile or had physical presence in Virginia on, and for at least five years prior to, his death;
- d. In the case of a qualifying child, is deceased and the surviving parent had been, at some point previous to marrying the deceased military member, a Virginia domicile for at least five years or is and has been a Virginia domicile or has had physical presence in Virginia for at least five years prior to student’s application for admission; or
- e. In the case of a qualified spouse, is deceased and the surviving spouse had been, at some time previous to marrying the deceased military spouse, a Virginia domicile for at least five years or is and has been a Virginia domicile or has had physical presence in Virginia for at least five years prior to his or her admission application.

Benefits

Tuition/Fee Waiver

Eligible students, as confirmed by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), are guaranteed waiver of all tuition and mandatory fees at a Virginia public college or university regardless of degree program or enrollment level.

Note: Mandatory fees are those fees incurred after tuition is charged and does not include application or enrollment fees.

Stipend

In addition, as funds are available, eligible students may receive a stipend to offset other educational expenses incurred by the student, such as room, board, books, and supplies. Please note that the stipend is not available for the advance purchase of books. The current maximum authorized award is \$1,800, allocated to fall and spring terms according to the schedule on the right.

Only students appearing on the verification rosters released by SCHEV to the institutions will be funded for the terms specified as authorized, regardless of certification/verification from any other source.

Enrollment Level	Credit Hours as of census date (end of add/drop)		Term Amount
	Undergraduate	Graduate	
Full-Time	12+	9+	\$900
3/4-Time	9-11	7-8	\$675
Half-Time	6-8	5-6	\$450
<Half-Time	1-5	1-4	\$225

Stipend priority funding system for fall and spring stipends

Because there may not be sufficient funding to make full VMSDEP stipends to all eligible students, a priority funding system will be used to determine the order and amount of stipends. Students in a higher Priority category must receive their full projected annual stipend, as determined by SCHEV based on student enrollment level, before subsequent categories are considered for funding.

Only students appearing on the verification rosters released by SCHEV to the institutions will be funded for the terms specified as authorized, regardless of certification/verification from any other source.

The priority dates are as follows:

- **First Priority Date: December 1**
Includes fall and spring term authorizations received by SCHEV from DVS as of December 1. All students within this category will receive the same award amount for the equivalent enrollment level for each current year term authorized by DVS by the first priority date.
- **Second Priority Date: February 1**
Includes fall and spring term authorizations received by SCHEV from DVS between December 2 and February 1. If funding remains after stipends for First Priority students are fully funded, stipends for Second Priority students will be made. If remaining funds are insufficient to fund at the First Priority level, then a reduction in the amount of all Second Priority stipends will be implemented, but all students within the category will receive the same award amount for the equivalent enrollment level for each current year term authorized by DVS by the second priority date.
- **Third Priority Date: March 1**
Includes fall and spring term authorizations received by SCHEV from DVS between February 2 and March 1. If all stipends for First Priority and Second Priority students are fully funded at their respective stipend amounts and funds remain, stipends for Third Priority students will be made. If remaining funds are insufficient to fund at the Second Priority level, then a reduction in the amount of Third Priority stipends will be implemented, but all students within the category will receive the same award amount for the equivalent enrollment level for each current year term authorized by DVS by the third priority date.

If funds remain after the priority category authorizations for fall and spring are funded, additional stipends at the Third Priority level will be made on a first-come, first-served basis (based first on date of DVS notice of term authorization to SCHEV and then date of DVS term authorization) until May 8 or when funding is exhausted, whichever occurs first.

No stipends can be funded once the annual deadline for requesting disbursement of funds to institutions has passed.

Stipend priority funding system for summer stipends

In May of each year, if all fall and spring term authorizations have been funded and sufficient funds remain, summer stipends will be awarded. Priority for summer awards will be based on a first-come, first served basis until funding is exhausted or the cut off for fiscal year disbursement requests, whichever occurs first. The first-come first-served basis is based first on the date DVS provides notice of summer term authorization to SCHEV and second on the date that DVS authorized the student for the summer term.

No stipends can be funded once the annual deadline for requesting disbursement of funds to institutions has passed.

If funds are available for summer stipends, students eligible for summer stipends are those:

- 1) Who have been authorized by the Department of Veterans Services for summer benefits;
- 2) For whom SCHEV has received DVS notice of summer authorization as of May 1 of the award year;
- 3) Who have remaining eligibility (i.e., have not been awarded the full annual award during the fall and spring terms);
- 4) Who appear on the enrolling institution's summer stipend roster;
- 5) For whom the enrolling institution has received DVS notice of summer authorization; and
- 6) Whose information appears on the roster completed by the institution and returned to SCHEV by the annual deadline.

Stipend restrictions

The following restrictions apply to the stipend:

- 1) Stipends are based on available funding and are awarded according to the above priority system.
- 2) The stipend is not available for noncredit courses, which include courses taken for audit.
- 3) For purposes of determining the stipend amount, the enrollment level is determined as of the end of the institution's census date (end of add/drop period); credit hours added after that date may not be included in the student's enrollment level.
- 4) A student may receive the stipend through one institution only. If a student is enrolled concurrently at multiple participating institutions and there is a formal consortium agreement in place, the student may receive funding based on the combined enrollment. If there is no formal consortium agreement, the stipend amount will be based and disbursed on the higher level of enrollment. However, a student remains eligible for the waiver of tuition and fees at each institution even if enrolled at multiple participating institutions.
- 5) The maximum amount of the VMSDEP stipend, when combined with "other scholarships, grants, and waivers" (i.e. other gift aid), cannot exceed the student's cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, etc.). Other gift aid may include athletic or academic scholarships, tuition waivers, veteran's benefits, etc.

Example: John Smith is enrolled full-time for both fall and spring terms. His room, board, book, supply, and other expenses total \$15,000. He expects to receive a \$5,000 VMSDEP tuition and fee waiver, a \$5,550 Pell Grant, a \$450 SEOG Grant, and a \$3,000 institutional grant – a total of \$14,000 in gift aid. Expenses (\$15,000) minus expected gift aid (\$14,000) equals \$1,000. Because the amount of the VMSDEP stipend combined with other gift aid cannot exceed expenses, his annual VMSDEP stipend would be reduced to \$1,000.

- 6) If a student withdraws from college after the census date, the stipend is adjusted by a percentage equivalent to the tuition refund policy in effect at the institution.

Example: John Smith is receiving a \$450 stipend for the spring term. He withdraws from the institution at the point where a student would be liable for 50% of charges. John is eligible to retain 50% of his stipend, or \$225.
- 7) If a student is allowed to retroactively drop one or more courses after the census date, the student's stipend amount is recalculated based on the current number of enrolled credit hours.
- 8) No stipends will be awarded after the cut off for fiscal year disbursement requests has passed.

Renewal

Benefits are limited to a total of four (4) years combined for undergraduate and graduate programs. However, benefits do not have to be used in four consecutive years, allowing for a break or breaks in a student's education. The stipend is contingent upon available annual funding.

Stipend Process

- 1) The student submits to DVS their VMSDEP application and a Virginia public college or university acceptance letter. Applications available online at: <http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/veterans-benefits.shtml>; contact information:
 VMSDEP Coordinator
 Phone: (804) 225-2083
 Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- 2) DVS reviews the application and determines eligibility.
- 3) DVS provides an authorization letter to the student as well as the institution and then provides the authorization information to SCHEV.
- 4) SCHEV, working with the institution, verifies enrollment as of the end of the term's drop/add date, determines student's final award amount for the term, and requests disbursement of funds to the institution approximately four to six weeks into the term.
- 5) The institution applies the funds to the student's account.

- 6) Funds are first applied to institutional direct charges, such as room and board. Disbursements made by the institution to the student, if applicable, are then subject to the institution's student refund policy.
- 7) If the student withdraws after the census date, the award amount will be prorated based on the institution's tuition refund policy.
- 8) If a student is allowed to retroactively drop one or more courses after the census date, the student's stipend amount is recalculated based on the current number of enrolled credit hours.

Authorizing Language

Code of Virginia § 23.1-608: <http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodeupdates/title23.1/section23.1-608/>

2017 Virginia Acts of Assembly, Chapter 836:

Item 144.F

1. *Out of this appropriation, \$1,980,000 the first year and \$1,980,000 the second year from the general fund is designated to support the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents program, § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia, to provide up to a \$1,800 annual stipend to offset the costs of room, board, books and supplies for qualified survivors and dependents of military service members.*
2. *The amount of the stipend is an estimate depending on the number of students eligible under § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia. Changes that increase or decrease the grant amount shall be determined by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.*
3. *The Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, shall allocate these funds to public institutions of higher education on behalf of students qualifying under this provision.*
4. *Each institution of higher education shall report the number of recipients for this program to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia by April 1 of each year. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall report this information to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by May 15 of each year.*
5. *The Department of Veterans Services shall consult with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia prior to the dissemination of any information related to the financial benefits provided under this program.*

Item 468

- A. *Notwithstanding § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia, the department shall provide the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia the information these schools need to administer the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependent Education Program. The department shall retain the responsibility to certify the eligibility of those who apply for financial aid under this program.*
- B. *No surviving spouse or child may receive the education benefits provided by § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia, and funded by this or similar state appropriations, for more than four years or its equivalent.*