

Before we begin...

- The webinar will start at **2 pm** (eastern daylight time)
- Please make sure to:
 - Mute your phone
 - Turn off any webcams or microphones (if applicable)
- **Audio can ONLY be accessed by calling 1-800-767-1750**
 - **Conference code: 37638**
- Slides will be available in 1-2 weeks on our website under the **School Training Resources** page



VBA Education Service Quarterly Webinar

November 29, 2017

Veterans Benefits Administration

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

Agenda

- Harry W. Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (Forever GI Bill)
- E-Force
- Operations Overview
- IPERA- Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act
- Dual Certification
- Question & Answer

Housekeeping

- Participants may submit questions and feedback during the webinar. We want this to be beneficial for you.
- Answers to questions will be provided when a copy of the webinar is uploaded to www.benefits.va.gov/gibill
- To find the webinars, visit www.benefits.va.gov/gibill
 - Click on “For School Administrators”
 - Select “School Resources”
 - Select “Education Benefit Presentations” under the Certifications and Training header
- For any specific or situational questions you may have, please contact your ELR or call the School Certifying Official Hotline

The Harry W. Colmery Act of 2017 ("Forever GI Bill")

November 2017

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017



15-year limitation to use benefits is removed for Veterans who left active duty on or after January 1, 2013, children who became eligible for the Fry Scholarship on or after January 1, 2013, and all Fry Scholarship eligible spouses



Restores GI Bill benefits in the event of a school closure



Reservists who lost eligibility under the Reserve Educational Assistance Program due to sunset can have service credited toward Post-9/11 GI Bill



Establishes a VA High Technology Pilot Program and STEM Scholarship

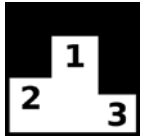


Certain work-study activities permanently authorized

Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017



Post 9/11 GI Bill can be used for accredited independent study at certain non-higher learning institutions



VA will provide information on schools that offer Veterans priority enrollment



Full Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to Purple Heart awardees



Extends Yellow Ribbon Program to Active Duty Servicemembers, Fry, and Purple Heart recipients



Eliminates 40% benefit level and expands 60% benefit level

Implementation Overview

- Established an integrated project team with members from Education Service, IT, General Counsel, and Corporate Communication.
- Program Management Contract in progress to support implementation effort.
- Closely aligned with the Office of Resource Management to evaluate required staffing needs.
- VA and 4 Corners meet regularly to discuss implementation.
- Education Service launched website and Facebook content:



www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/ForeverGIBill



www.facebook.com/gibillEducation

Status Update

➤ **Section 106 – REAP Eligibility Credited Toward Post-9/11 GI Bill Program**

- ✓ Created system workarounds to process these cases
- ✓ Developed letters to send to potentially eligible claimants (approx. 2,800 Reservists)
- ✓ Created a Fact Sheet and Notification to ensure standardized responses to inquiries

➤ **Section 109 – Restoration of Entitlement for School Closure**

- ✓ Specialized team in Muskogee
- ✓ Streamlining restoration application
- ✓ Will notify potential claimants electronically, social media campaign and GI Bill website announcements to accompany

Status Updates (cont.)

➤ **Special Application Benefit Restoration**

- ✓ Students who attended courses or programs discontinued during the period January 1, 2015 to August 16, 2017, at an accredited IHL, and did not transfer any credits to a comparable program will have their credits treated as though they did not receive credit toward completion of their program
- ✓ Entitlement will not be charged for the entire period of enrollment in the program of education
- ✓ Consulted with Department of Education on transfer of credit procedures
- ✓ Impacts approximately 10,000 claimants
- ✓ More than 150 campuses closed during this time, including ITT Technical Institute, Corinthian College

Status Updates (cont.)

➤ **Section 112 – Time Limit Elimination**

- ✓ Scrubbing websites and updating public facing material with details on removal of delimiting date
- ✓ Communications plan will further clarify who is entitled to the Forever GI Bill
- ✓ Reviewing correspondence to beneficiaries to make appropriate changes
- ✓ Eligible individuals do not have to take any action; the limitation is simply removed

➤ **Section 303 – Priority Enrollment**

- ✓ Education and Digital Services are working together on process to receive priority enrollment information for schools
- ✓ Priority Enrollment to be included on GI Bill Comparison Tool
- ✓ Not a condition of approval (similar to Principals of Excellence)

➤ **Section 116 – High Technology Program Pilot**

- ✓ Office of Business Process Integration studying outsourcing possibility
- ✓ Education and General Counsel reviewing statutory language to outline program parameters: eligibility, entitlement, approving officials

Status Updates (cont.)

➤ **Section 201 – Work Study**

- ✓ Website updated to show program is now permanent

➤ **Section 302 – Independent Study Programs**

- ✓ Allows anyone eligible for GI Bill to use their benefits at an accredited independent study program at an area career and technical school, or a postsecondary vocational school providing postsecondary level education
- ✓ Programs will go through the normal course of approval by the appropriate State Approving Agency; any new programs will be added to our GI Bill Comparison Tool
- ✓ VA has developed comprehensive communications plans to notify appropriate stakeholders and Veterans of changes

➤ **Sections 107 and 501 change Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) payments**

- ✓ 107: MHA based on campus where the student physically attends majority of classes
- ✓ 501: MHA aligns with reduced Department of Defense housing allowances
- ✓ Significant IT solution necessary to ensure automation continues
- ✓ Office of Information Technology has committed to implementing solution by August 1, 2018
 - First task order on recently awarded IT contract
 - Contractors currently onboarding
 - Work to begin early November

We Need Your Help!

November is our “Veterans Month” and we are using it to promote the provisions that have an immediate and positive effect on Veterans and their families using VA benefits to pursue their education goals:

- Section 112: Elimination of 15-year Limitation to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill
- Section 106: Post-9/11 GI Bill Eligibility for Reservist Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Section 109: Assistance for Students Affected by School Closures
- Section 201: Work Study Permanent Program
- Section 302: Using the GI Bill at Technical Schools and non-Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs)



Please help us get the word out by cross-promoting on your social platforms and any other forums you use.



EFORCE – The Future of Education Service

November 29, 2017

Marie George
EFORCE Team Leader, Education Service

Veterans Benefits Administration

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

Overview

- The EFORCE (“Education Salesforce”) team established in January 2017 completed the first phase of the EFORCE project, “Compliance Survey platform”, EFORCE-C&L (Compliance & Liaison) in July 2017.
- EFORCE team and our contract partners designed, built, and implemented the EFORCE-C&L Compliance Survey application, as well as developed training materials and trained both VA and SAA users.
- In October 2017, the contract for assisting with EFORCE (and other VBA applications) continues. Again working with our contract partners updating the current live platform to the EFORCE C&L application, and working towards development of a new system for tracking program approvals, tentatively called EFORCE-Approvals.
- This project allows us to use the current platform and continue through Ad hoc development phases in all aspects of our business.

Detailed Status

- Currently, the team is brainstorming solutions to current issues and future build-outs.
- The status on the EFORCE-C&L application is to work with our contract partners, Accenture Federal to create paperless system.
- The team is developing solution to the PII issue utilizing a feature of Salesforce called “Communities” that allows outside users (e.g. those without a Salesforce account) to transmit PII securely to the EFORCE application.
- To emphasize this “Community Portal” (document deposit site) will allow our customers (School Certifying Officials) to upload veteran/student records in a safe and secure way, becoming paperless.

Contact Us



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



POST★9/11
GI BILL

It's Your Future

Eforce Mailbox: VAVBASTL/RO/EFORCE EFORCE.VBASTL@va.gov



Operations Overview

FY 2017

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Claims Processed and Timeliness

- FY 2017 Average Days to Complete:
 - Originals: 24.7 days
 - Supplementals: 8.6 days
- Over 3.8 million claims processed
- Education Call Center received 2,929,767 calls during Fiscal Year 2017
- FY 2018 Goals:
 - Originals: 28 Days
 - Supplementals: 14 Days

Claims Processed and Timeliness

- During the fall peak enrollment period from August 2017 to October 2017, RPOs received an increase in education claims.
 - Pending inventory was higher for FY17 compared to FY16 (approximately 24-percent)
 - Last year during the fall peak enrollment period there were 108K claims pending vs. 143K this year.

Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act IPERA



Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA)

- IPERA is an internal control process within each federal agency to verify that payments disbursed are accurate and valid.
- VA receives samples of education claims from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) where payments were previously made.
- The Quality Assurance Team in Education Service sends requests to School Certifying Officials (SCO) to request documentation.

Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA)

- Documentation requests the following:
 - a. Copies of student transcripts
 - b. Copies of attendance records
 - c. Copies of billing records
 - d. A copy of the tuition and fees page in the school catalog or schedule of tuition and fees.
- An e-mail request will come to the SCO from the mailbox “22Quality.VBAVACO@va.gov”
- A SCO has 2-weeks to respond to the initial request. If the request is not answered, there will be a follow-up request.

Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA)

Sample e-mail you will receive:

Dear School Certifying Official:

As part of the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA), VA Education Service performs quarterly audits of randomly selected Veterans. Part of the audit requires review of supporting documents for enrollment certifications submitted. Please note that we are not auditing your school, just the individual listed below. Please review the file for:

| Sample ID | Name of Student | Last 4 | RO | Term | Facility Code | Name of School |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------|----|------|---------------|----------------|
| FY16Q4ED_33_160 | | | | | | |

VA will request a student's transcripts, billing records, attendance records and school catalog information verifying the tuition and fees.

Identifying information for the student needs to be on the documents submitted (student last name and last four of social security number).

Please include the Sample ID Number, listed above, in the Subject Line of your email and return to 22Quality.VBAVACO@va.gov. An Education Liaison Representative (ELR) may be contacted directly if there are further questions.

Dual Certification



Dual Certification

- Schools are obligated to submit student's enrollment "without delay"
 - In the SCO handbook (page 44) this is expressed as, "Schools are requested to submit certifications as early as possible in order to ensure that students receive their benefit payments in a timely manner, but must be submitted within 30 days of the beginning of the term."
- An effective way to minimize student debts and adjustments that are confusing to students is for schools to submit an enrollment certification with \$0.00 (as if they were unknown), and then follow-up after the drop add period or term's conclusion with the actual enrollment information and tuition and fees. This best practice is called "dual certification."
- Dual certification is the process by which a school may certify an enrollment and fill out the term dates, credit hours, and other pertinent information (claimant's SSN, address, school facility code etc.).

Dual Certification

- SCOs are encouraged to leave the tuition and fee field blank with \$0 being reported. After the drop/add period or another specified time by the school, the SCO may send another enrollment certification (VA Form 22-1999) or an amended enrollment certification (AM 22-1999) with tuition and fees on the 2nd enrollment.
- **This process is highly encouraged** but is not mandatory
- The benefits of dual certifications are two-fold:
 - It allows the school to certify an enrollment in a timely manner while ensuring that the student receives housing allowance, books and supplies stipend, and;
 - It allows for a more precise report from the schools when they certify tuition and fees and ***prevents overpayments***.
- In addition, schools also get an accurate picture of how many credits a student pursued during a term, quarter, or semester and have the ability to track what an individual student owes.

Questions & Answers



Question & Answer

Question #1: Will IPERA (Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act) will be done throughout the year as well as a compliance survey?

Answer #1: IPERA is a separate audit conducted through the Office of Inspector General (OIG) with documentation requests solicited through Education Service. IPERA is conducted during the fiscal year and could be in addition to a compliance survey.

Question #2: Is IPERA aligned (sic) with school debts?

Answer #2: No, IPERA specifically targets payments that were issued to the school or student(s) directly. IPERA is an internal control for payments issued.

Question #3: Could IPERA inquiries be sent to all School Certifying Officials (SCO's), the SCO of record for contact or just our school's P.O.E. point of contact?

Answer #3: IPERA inquiries are only sent to approved SCOs in WEAMS.

Question #4: Any payment issued to the student or the school is subject to IPERA?

Answer #4: IPERA is subject to any payments that a federal agency makes to any third party. IPERA is a statutory requirement and all federal agencies' are subject to review.

Question & Answer cont'd.

Question #5: Is there an ETA on VA-ONCE being fixed?

Answer #5: As of December 1, 2017, VA-Once issues were still being corrected. A new flash will be updated.

Question #6: VA-ONCE will not allow a \$0.00 certification. Has this changed?

Answer #6: VA-Once has NOT changed. A zero certification is allowed.

Question #7: Is there an update on what needs to be provided by schools to comply with section 114 of the Colmery Act?

Answer #7: We are in the process of determining exactly what information, what method, and when this information must be reported to VA. We will notify all educational institutions of the requirements at a later date. At this time, educational institutions are not required to report any additional information.

Question & Answer cont'd.

Question #8: The original certification, 22-1999 needs to be submitted as early as possible (within 30 days of school starting), but the amendment for tuition and fees (t & f), 22-199b can be done at any point in which the school feels comfortable with accurate billing?

Answer #8: Yes, the amended enrollment can be sent in for t & f at a later point in time. Adding t & f does not change the term dates or the number of credit hours. However any other adjustments should follow the 30 day rule if there is a “change in enrollment”.

Question #9: During the initial certification submission, when a student reduces their credits during the drop/add deadline period, a final certification was submitted with the reduced credits and the amount of the tuition and fees. A veterans claims examiner asked that the tuition and fees be submitted for the original credit hours. Is this correct policy?

Answer #9: Yes, VA automatically issues a one-time grant of mitigating circumstances for up to 6 credit hours for the first instance of a reduction or termination which is after the drop period, and before the end of the term, for which a non-punitive grade is assigned. This can only be done once for the claimant and requires the hours taken, as well as tuition and fees charged prior to the reduction.

Contact Us

Website: www.benefits.va.gov/gibill

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gibilleducation

GI Bill Hotline: 1-888-442-4551

