Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program Frequently Asked Questions 2021-2022

Overview

VMSDEP is a Commonwealth of Virginia program that 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. Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard.

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is responsible for managing the program and collaborates with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and Virginia's public colleges and universities to assist survivors and dependents of qualified Veterans in attaining their educational goals.

1. **Who are eligible to receive benefits under the VMSDEP?**

   Tier 1 Eligibility - the student must be admitted to a Virginia public college or university and the spouse or the child (the child must be between the ages of 16 and 29 and there is no age limit for the spouse) of a Veteran who became totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of military service and meets the domiciliary requirement as defined in the Code of Virginia § 23.1-608.

   Tier 2 Eligibility - the student must be admitted to a Virginia public college or university and the spouse or the child (the child must be between the ages of 16 and 29 and there is no age limit for the spouse) of a Veteran or military service member who was killed; became missing in action; taken prisoner of war; or has been ratedtotally and permanently disabled or at least 90% permanently disabled due to direct involvement in covered military combat (includes military operation against terrorism; a peacekeeping mission; a terrorist act; or any armed conflict) and meets the domiciliary requirement as defined in the Code of Virginia § 23.1-608.

2. **What benefits are available under the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)?**

   Waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for **Tier 1** and **Tier 2** eligible students. Mandatory fees are defined by each school.

   Tier 2 students are eligible for a VMSDEP stipend to offset the costs of room, board, books, and supplies. The amount of stipend is contingent on funding and it is not guaranteed. If available, the VMSDEP stipend is provided once per semester.

3. **How do I check on the status of my VMSDEP stipend**?

   The VMSDEP stipend is disbursed by only the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). If available, the SCHEV releases the funds to your attending school for allocation. To inquire about the status of your VMSDEP stipend allotment, you must contact your attending school's financial aid department; and if you are informed the VMSDEP stipend is not yet released to the school, you may request the referenced department contact the SCHEV for detailed information pertaining to your VMSDEP stipend disbursement.

4. **May I use my VMSDEP benefits after I reach age 30?**

No. However, a dependent child above age 29 may request an age waiver to use the benefits in cases in which extenuating circumstances prevented the dependent child from using the benefits before age 30. You must submit substantial evidence and a statement with the following information to request an age waiver due to extenuating circumstances:

- Your full name;
- Your date of birth;
- Your current mailing address; and
- The extenuating circumstances that prevented you from using VMSDEP benefits prior to your 30th birthday.

You must submit the information by email to VMSDEP@dvs.virginia.gov.

5. **Can a Veteran's or military service member's stepchild or adopted child take advantage of VMSDEP benefits?**

   The biological and adopted child of a qualified military service member may take advantage of VMSDEP benefits. Eligibility does not include the stepchild.

6. **As an eligible child, if I get married while attending school, do I lose my eligibility for VMSDEP benefits?**

   No, an eligible child's marital status does not affect such child's eligibility for VMSDEP benefits.

7. **Who can submit an application for VMSDEP benefits?**

   You may submit an application if you are the:
   - Biological or Adopted Child;
     NOTE: The biological or adopted child must be at least age 18. The benefits are not available for the step-child.

- Parent/Spouse; or
  - The Spouse may submit an application as the "Spouse" of a qualifying Veteran or Service member; and
  - The Parent other than the qualifying Veteran or Service member may register an account and submit an application for the biological or adopted child **only** if such child is younger than age 18. The benefits are not available for the step-child.

- Veteran
  NOTE: The Veteran may register an account and submit an application for the biological or adopted child **only** if such child is younger than age 18. The benefits are not available for the step-child.

8. What should I do to apply for VMSDEP benefits?

Complete the VMSDEP online application found at https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/education-employment/virginia-military-survivors-and-dependents-education-program-2-2-2.

9. How long does the application process take?

Application processing time-frame takes six weeks. In order to determine eligibility prior to your semester start date, a completed VMSDEP application should be submitted at least 90 calendar days prior to the date tuition and mandatory fees are due to the school:

Semester You Plan to Start Your Benefits	Submit Application By
Fall	May 1st
Spring	September 1st
Summer	December 15th

10. Do I need to reapply every year of enrollment?

No, you do not have to reapply. Beneficiaries must update enrollment information each semester in order to use VMSDEP benefits. Instructions to update enrollment information are located online at www.dvs.virginia.gov.

NOTE: Beneficiaries should also contact the attending schools for further potential instructions to use the benefits at the respective institutions**.**

11. When do I update my enrollment information?

Enrollment Open/Close Dates:

Terms	Open	Close (Due by)
Fall	July 1	October 31
Spring (Winter credits hours are combined with Spring)	November 1	March 31
Summer	April 1	June 30

If you do not complete your enrollment update by the listed *Close (Due by)* date, you must request retroactive approval from your attending Virginia public college or university; and if approved, the respective institution will notify the VMSDEP Office of such approval; upon which, the Office will authorize the qualifying semester.

12. What should I do if I have a student account balance after I have updated my enrollment information?

Access your account and view the semester(s) for which the attending school(s) has your authorization(s); then, you must contact the attending school(s) for detailed information pertaining to your student account balance for the listed semester(s).

To view your authorization information (Child):

- Please login to the myVMSDEP portal;
- Select "Step 6 Application Management"; and
- Select the "Manage Benefits" button (The student benefits page will display).

To view your authorization information (Spouse or Parent):

- Please login to the myVMSDEP portal;
- Select "Step 2: Student's Applications";
- Select "List Applications";
- Select the "Edit" button located in the row of the respective applicant;
- Select "Step 6 Application Management"; and
- Select the "Manage Benefits" button (The student benefits page will display).

13. How does the tuition and mandatory fees waiver work?

Beneficiaries are able to use the benefits for eight semesters. This also applies if you attend one school for part of your eligibility period and another school for the remainder. Please note that semesters, not academic credit earned, is the standard measure to determine benefit usage.

14. Are VMSDEP beneficiaries entitled to receive a stipend for school attendance?

Tier 1 beneficiaries are not eligible for a stipend.

Tier 2 beneficiaries are eligible to receive a stipend. For detailed information regarding VMSDEPstipend funding please visit: https://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/tuition-aid-section/financial-aid/vmsdepfactsheet20210930.pdf.

The VMSDEP stipend is disbursed by only the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). If available, the SCHEV releases the funds to your attending school for allocation. To inquire about the status of your VMSDEP stipend allotment, you must contact your attending school's financial aid department; and if you are informed the VMSDEP stipend is not yet released to the school, you may request the referenced department contact the SCHEV for detailed information pertaining to your VMSDEP stipend disbursement.

15. Does entitlement to VMSDEP benefits guarantee admission to a Virginia public college or university?

No, eligibility for the VMSDEP benefit does not guarantee admission. All student must meet each individual college or university's admission requirements.

16. Can I transfer my VMSDEP benefits to a different school?

Yes. You may use your VMSDEP benefits at a different Virginia public college or university. Please see the Update Enrollment Instructions for detailed instructions.

17. May I attend more than one Virginia public colleges or universities at the same time?

Yes, VMSDEP beneficiaries are permitted to use the benefits at multiple Virginia public colleges and universities.

18. May I take online courses?

Yes, as long as those classes are offered by a Virginia public college or university.

19. May I use my VMSDEP benefits for remedial or refresher courses?

Yes, as long as those classes are offered by a Virginia public college or university.

20. May I use VMSDEP benefits for non-credit courses?

Yes, as long as those classes are offered by a Virginia public college or university.

Non-credit courses are **not eligible for stipend**. (Please see SCHEV's Tier 2 Stipend fact sheet (https://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/tuition-aid-section/financial-aid/vmsdepfactsheet20210930.pdf)

21. May I use VMSDEP benefits for study-abroad courses?

Yes, if a study abroad program is owned by a public institution, then the respective institution is required to waive the tuition and mandatory fees; however, if the program is a contract, or third-party program offered through, but independent of, a public institution, the tuition and fees charges cannot be waived because VMSDEP benefits are not applicable at institutions other than a public institution.

22. May I use my VMSDEP benefits to earn a masters or professional degree?

Yes, VMSDEP benefits may be used for any program offered at any Virginia public or university.
NOTE: The benefits are available for 8 semesters. This includes graduate studies, law school, etc.

23. May I use my VMSDEP benefits to attend a private school or a school in another state?

No, VMSDEP benefits are only applicable at a Virginia public colleges and universities.

If you choose to attend a private school, you may be entitled to receive federal education benefits offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Visit the VA's website at https://www.va.gov/ to obtain additional information.

24. What happens if I drop out of school or have a temporary interruption in matriculation?

If you withdraw from enrollment and did not use VMSDEP benefits to cover any part of charges incurred during enrollment, your attending school will report you did not use the benefits for the respective semester which will not count towards your remaining benefits balance. If you feel it is a discrepancy with your remaining benefits balance, you should submit a completed Recalculation Request Form to the VMSDEP Office.

25. Are there any attendance or academic requirements that I must meet to continue my eligibility under VMSDEP?

No. You do not have to report your any attendance or academic information to the VMSDEP Office.

26. If I do not successfully complete one of my courses, may I repeat it under VMSDEP?

Yes. VMSDEP benefits apply toward any courses taken by an eligible student within any given semester. The benefits are calculated on a semester basis regardless of the how many coursestaken within a semester.

NOTE: Taking one course within a semester will result in using one semester of VMSDEP benefits; and similarly, taking multiple courses within a semester will result in using one semester of VMSDEP benefits.

27. How is VMSDEP different from the VA's Dependents Education Assistance (DEA/Chapter 35) Program?

The DEA/Chapter 35 is offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and is not administered by the VMSDEP Office. VMSDEP is provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is administered by the VirginiaDepartment of Veterans Services. The DEA program is a program offered by VA and falls under the G.I. Bill benefits umbrella. Eligibility for one program is not automatically equate to eligibility for the other.

28. Can I use my VMSDEP benefits in conjunction with my DEA (Chapter 35) benefits?

Yes, eligible students are permitted to use VMSDEP and DEA benefits concurrently.

NOTE: Eligibility periods for the programs vary; therefore, students should consider their individual circumstances to determine whether to use the benefits simultaneously or separately.

29. If approved for VMSDEP benefits, can I be reimbursed for education expenses paid for out-of-pocket?

Eligibility for the VMSDEP benefit is based upon the date that an application was **submitted**. It is at the discretion of the college or university whether any tuition and fees applied to the student's account prior to the VMSDEP benefit authorization date. Please note that colleges and universities are not obligated to refund any monies that have already been paid.

30. What should I do if I have additional questions?

Please contact the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

Please review the following for detailed information:

- VMSDEP website for detailed information
- SCHEV Tier 2 Stipend Fact Sheet
- Email: VMSDEP@dvs.virginia.gov
- Phone: (804) 225-2083