

BVS EDUCATION REPORT

1. Date of Report: 08/07/2022
2. BVS POC(s): Michael Dick, Paige Cherry
3. Service Area/Program: *Education*
4. DVS Director/Program Manager: *Patrice Jones, Director of Education Programs*
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):
The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) Education Service Line serves as the State Approving Agency (SAA) for education benefits (i.e., G.I Bill benefits) administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). As such, the VDVS Education Service Line is responsible for effectively reviewing and monitoring education programs in accordance with the provisions of Title 38 of the United States Code (U.S.C.). The VDVS Education Service Line is the sole approval authority in Virginia for approving education institutions and establishments that enroll students in programs involving USDVA education benefits. Educational programs eligible to enroll such students may include state supported colleges/universities, private and for profit colleges/universities, technical/trade schools, licensing/certification programs, and OJT/Apprenticeship programs.

In addition, the VDVS Education Service Line administers the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), which provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who have been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as 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.
6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)? *Colleges, Universities, GI Bill beneficiaries, spouses and children of military service members.*
7. What are the service line's primary objectives?
-Remove barriers to state and federal education benefits to facilitate the appropriate and timely delivery of education benefits to veterans and entitled dependents

-Ensure education programs are administered efficiently and in accordance with controlling law and regulations

-Protect the G.I. Bill from Fraud, Waste, and Abuse
8. What are the key results that support the objective(s)?
 - *The Key results include meeting the requirements of the Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Veteran Affairs for the State Approving Agency. The staff must complete the surveys (audits) and submit written reports to the VA, including any findings and reported outcomes. In instances where a school certifies a student's enrollment incorrectly, the SAA submits that finding to the VA with explanatory information. The VA will then determine the*

\$ amount that is in error and return that information to the SAA to report to the facility. The SAA must also process approvals for facilities within 30 days of receiving a complete application from facilities. All programs must be approved via the Virginia State Approving Agency in order for facilities to be able to certify it for payment. Our OKRs for this objective are:

- 1) Process 100% of G.I. Bill approval request within 30 days of receipt, and*
 - 2) Complete 100% of Veterans Affairs assigned compliance visits annually per agreement. This year the cooperative agreement included 56 compliance Surveys.*
- The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program seeks to increase awareness regarding the program and increase enrollment for eligible beneficiaries. VMSDEP OKRs are:*
 - 1) VMSDEP will increase the number of approved beneficiaries by 50% by December 2022. In FY 21 we processed and approved 2,680 applications*

9. What specific objectives (end of FY2022, end of FY2025) has the service line established and what progress has the service line/program made toward achieving the objective(s).

Note: Actions associated with USDVA requirements are measured against the federal fiscal year calendar, not the Virginia fiscal year calendar. The federal fiscal year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September.

- A. Complete 100% of Veterans Affairs assigned compliance visits annually per the Cooperative Agreement. As of July 27, 2022, the SAA has completed 56 (100%) of the assigned surveys for the federal fiscal year per the Cooperative Agreement with USDVA.*
- B. VMSDEP will increase the number of approved beneficiaries by 50% by December 2022. As of July 31, 2022, the program has increased approved beneficiaries by over 30%*
- C. Increase approved On-the-Job Training & Apprenticeship (OJT/APP) active facilities by 5% quarterly. The SAA has developed an outreach strategy with the Virginia Values Veterans program in order to create a pathway for approval for V3 companies. In this regard, V3 Regional Program Managers will encourage companies to consider approval to certify employees for the G.I.Bill. After V3 Certification, employers will be encouraged to meet with the SAA to determine eligibility for approval.*

10. What are some operational highlights from the past year?

The State Approving Agency has met the FY 22 compliance survey contractual requirements with the US Department of Veteran Affairs. The agency was contracted to conduct 56 surveys before August 15, 2022. The amount of funds recovered as a result of the surveys to date is \$76,735.49 in overpayments and \$5,888.95 in underpayments. (Overpayments are amounts that must be repaid to the VA based on errors, underpayments should have been paid out and will be paid to the school and/or the veteran as a result of findings during a compliance survey.)

11. What type of outreach did the service line conduct and what are the results?

The VMSDEP established a phone outreach center on June 15, 2022, under the cognizance of the VMSDEP Program Manager. The agency's Benefits Service Line has identified 25,038 potential VMSDEP clients with 90% or higher disability rating. The center is currently staffed with 4 summer interns and as of July 26, 2022, to-date has made 2,574 calls.

12. What, if any, new initiatives / innovative solutions were launched during the past year?

As mentioned above, the VMSDEP outreach center was established on June 15, 2022.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area / program at present?

Visibility of the VMSDEP program

14. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans? *The SAA program ensures the timely and accurate delivery of education benefits, helps decrease higher education "predators", and ultimately protects the GI Bill from fraud, waste, and abuse. The VMSDEP provides tuition waivers to eligible beneficiaries*

15. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth? *Education programs provide resources and assistance to help veterans, live, work, and thrive in Virginia. Having smooth access to high-quality education programs is essential for keeping veterans in Virginia.*

16. What strategic opportunities are there for the future? *There is an opportunity to create state grants for veterans, spouses and dependents who may not be eligible for the G.I. Bill or may have used their benefits and need to complete or start their education journey. GAP funding would be great. More specifically, not every veteran who has served is eligible for GI Bill benefits, those who are eligible may have exhausted their benefits before completing their training or education, and others may have become ineligible due to date of service restrictions. Grants would be helpful for such students.*

17. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area? *There is also an initiative within the education unit, the Military Education & Workforce Initiative. This initiative works closely with the Veterans Services Foundation to administer a technology program to provide free laptops to student veterans and spouses at John Tyler Community College, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University. The Initiative also houses the Hire Vets Now Fellowship Program, the agency's DoD approved SkillBridge program.*