

You as a student should be empowered to take responsibility for your education, and the following strategies will help:

Be Organized:

Create a folder or binder for all education and VA related paperwork. Keep it safe!

Track Important Dates!

Know your assignment due dates, term dates, registration, drop/add and withdrawal dates, payment due dates, and grade release dates.

Transcripts of prior education:

Always have unofficial transcripts and a list of all previous schools with their addresses.

Be enthusiastic!

Jump right on getting information to all of the school's departments.

Track your classes:

Follow your degree plan. Know what courses are required for your degree and what courses are not.

Keep in touch with a Program Advisor:

Your School Certifying Official/Veterans Representative will be a great resource but generally they are not Academic or Program Advisors. Find out who your Academic or Program Advisor is and ask for details about class offerings, what order to take classes in and other important information as you pursue your degree.

Don't isolate yourself:

Network with other veterans and students!
Compare notes, and ask questions!

Paperwork! Paperwork!

Classes don't always work out. You may get called to back to active duty or family matters may necessitate leaving school. Don't just walk away! Withdraw from your classes through the either your School Certifying Official or through Enrollment Services. Explain your circumstances. Provide documentation. You may avoid an overpayment with the VA and be eligible for a refund from the school!

Ask Questions:

School staff are available to help; however, they can't help if you don't ask.

Remember:

School Certifying Officials/Veterans Representative vary from campus to campus.

Some:

- are prior service
- are able to focus only on the needs of veterans on their campus
- have several job functions and providing assistance with VA paperwork and processes is a small part of their larger job duties.

It's ok to ask for help or ask who can help if they are unable to assist!

You represent thousands of veterans that have come before you as well as all of those who will come after you, so maintain your military bearing.

Be Persistent, Be Professional

If at any time you need our assistance...

Call 1-800-562-2308 or

Email webmaster@dva.wa.gov or

Visit www.dva.wa.gov

Washington State
Guide
for
Veterans
Attending
College



1-800-562-2308

www.dva.wa.gov

Suggested Actions for Student Veterans

Dear Veteran,

On behalf of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and a grateful nation, we thank you for your service. We also commend you on your choice to use your service benefits to pursue your course of study in higher education!

Achieving your goals in education while adjusting to civilian life can be as rewarding and challenging as anything you accomplished while serving in uniform, but it will ultimately prove to be worth the effort.

This document was created by veterans with first-hand experience using the GI Bill and other education benefits to offer insights and lessons learned. We hope it will be helpful as you pursue your higher education goals!

Make sure you have a copy of your DD-214 Member Copy 4.

Contact the National Personnel Records Center at <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/> or call 1-866-272-6272 to order an official copy.

Submit your Federal Student Aid

Application online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov> as soon as you decide to go to school.

- Update your application with the school(s) of your choice as soon as possible.
- Check with the school(s) for any additional required paperwork.

Use all available online resources to educate yourself about VA benefits.

Examples:

- Federal <http://www.gibill.va.gov>
- State <http://www.dva.wa.gov/education.html>
- Check the website of the school you plan to attend.

Follow them on your social networking sites such as facebook or twitter so you receive the latest news, issues, and resources.

Contact the School Certifying Official/ Veterans Representative even if your planned start date is months away:

- Find out if your school and your intended program are VA approved.
- Find out if the courses you plan to take will help you get the job you want and make sure it is accredited for the professional licenses you will need.
- If you have used your GI Bill benefits before, let the your school know so you can determine your remaining entitlement.
- Ask about state and local funding for veterans, tuition reductions or waivers, scholarships, grants, Federal Financial Aid, and programs such as Yellow Ribbon and Troops to Teachers. Then decide the best way to pay for your education.
- Ask how long it will take to receive your GI Bill funds for tuition, living stipends, and book stipends. Payments are often received after you've already started school, so have a plan to support yourself at first.
- Find out exactly what the GI Bill will pay for, especially if you are a returning student.

- Ask about VA work study opportunities, this is tax-free employment for some students.
- If the school is a trade or technical school ask for contacts in your trade. Use programs such as Helmets to Hard Hats, Apprenticeship and OJT where available.
- Ask for information on jobs, housing, transportation, and other support services such as health and child care that you may need.
- Provide all information requested by the school as soon as possible. Timeliness and complete information are important.
- Ask if your school has a Veteran's Club or a VETCorps Member assigned to work with veterans on campus.

Contact your Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and speak with a Veterans Benefit Specialist about your State and Federal Veterans Benefits.

Make sure to ask about:

- Claims for service connected disabilities
- Applying for healthcare at your local VA Medical Center
- Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation, and Chapter 33 Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits
- Specific Washington Veterans Benefits
- VA work study positions or how to gain other employment
- Veteran's Service Organizations
- Counseling such as Vocational, Educational, Rehabilitation, or War Trauma

1-800-562-2308 or www.dva.wa.gov