1.4.4.1 The Post-9/11 GI Bill

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, signed by President Bush in June 2008, provides significant benefits for servicemembers on active duty and after their duty is over. Veterans and servicemembers with ninety days’ or more active duty service after September 10, 2001, and veterans who are discharged for a service-connected disability with at least thirty consecutive days of active duty service after September 10, 2001, are entitled to thirty-six months of educational assistance. The duration of service is generally based on aggregate service, not a single continuous period of service.

Service must have occurred on or after September 11, 2001. Servicemembers are eligible whether they are still serving on active duty or have been discharged or released. However, only certain types of discharges and releases qualify, including honorable discharges and discharges or releases for certain medical conditions or hardships. Those still on active duty may be better served using existing benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs has information to help servicemembers choose the best options.

In order to qualify, the student must be pursuing an approved program of education. The categories of approved programs include undergraduate and graduate degree programs, non-degree vocational programs, on-the-job training, online programs, and apprenticeships. For college degree programs, the amount that can be received for a public institution is the actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees assessed by that institution. The amount that can be received for a private institution is capped unless the institution participates in the Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program, described below. For non-college-degree programs (including vocational certificate programs), the amount that can be received is the lesser of the actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees or the national maximum statutory cap for private institutions.

Students receive money not only for tuition but, in many cases, are also eligible for housing allowances, a stipend for books and supplies, and in some cases even relocation payments. Some assistance is also available for students pursuing education on a half-time, or less than half-time, basis. In some situations, the benefit may be transferred to the servicemember’s spouse or children. The benefits are tiered based on the aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, with full benefits for thirty-six months of service and partial benefits for service between ninety days and thirty-six months. In addition, veterans who are discharged due to a service-connected disability with at least thirty continuous days of active duty service are eligible for full benefits.

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program—or Yellow Ribbon Program, as it is more commonly called—allows students to receive additional benefits when attending participating private institutions or when attending a public institution as an out of-state student. Institutions that participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program voluntarily choose an amount to contribute to the qualifying student’s costs for tuition and fees. In addition to the standard benefit provided under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs matches the amount contributed by the participating institution, up to the full cost of tuition and fees. Only veterans eligible for 100% of benefits can take advantage of the Yellow Ribbon Program.

For individuals whose last discharge or release from active duty is before January 1, 2013, the time period to use these benefits expires at the end of the fifteen-year period beginning on the date of the individual’s last discharge or release from active duty. For individuals whose last discharge or release from active duty is on or after January 1, 2013, the time period has no expiration date.

Footnotes


However, veterans qualifying due to discharge for a service-connected disability must have thirty days’ *continuous* service. 38 U.S.C. § 3311(b)(2).

Programs are approved for the purposes of the Post-9/11 GI Bill if they are approved under 38 U.S.C. §§ 3001–3035. 38 U.S.C. § 3313(b).


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[1] https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/