



Education Benefits for Survivors

December 2025

As a Surviving spouse or child, you can use benefits from multiple sources to continue your education. Benefits may cover the costs of tuition, fees, books, supplies and even living expenses.

Who provides education benefits for Survivors?

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Veteran service organizations (VSOs) and other non-profit organizations.
- State governments, including public colleges and universities.
- Individual schools, colleges and universities.



VA Education Benefits



VA educational benefits can be used for business, technical or vocational programs; certification tests; apprenticeships and on-the-job training; tutorial assistance and work-study programs, as well as programs in colleges and universities.

VA benefits for all surviving spouses and children

Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA)

Up to 36 months of benefits.

Must be used within 20 years.



Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship (Fry Scholarship)

Up to 36 months of benefits.

Surviving children who became eligible before January 1, 2013, may use this benefit until age 33.

The age limitation is removed if the child became eligible after January 1, 2013.

Some Survivors may qualify for **Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)** or **Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)**, if the service member participated in those programs, or the **Post-9/11 GI-Bill**, if the service member transferred benefits to a spouse and/or child before their death.

If you remarry, you'll keep your eligibility for the Fry Scholarship if you qualified for this education benefit through your previous marriage. If you had unused Fry Scholarship benefits that expired, you may be able to restore those benefits to use anytime after January 2, 2025, even if you've remarried. To get your benefits restored, you'll need to apply again using VA Form 22-5490. Surviving children must use benefits before age 26. Other restrictions may apply.

DEA or Fry Scholarship?

A Surviving child whose parent died before August 1, 2011, may use both the Fry Scholarship and DEA, one program at a time. Combined benefits can fund up to 81 months of education.

A child whose parent died after July 31, 2011, and Surviving spouses widowed on or after September 11, 2001, must make an irrevocable decision of which benefit (DEA or Fry) they wish to receive.

A comparison chart for Survivors with both DEA and Fry Scholarship eligibility is located on the VA website. The web address is included in the Links list below.

To receive VA educational benefits, you must attend a VA approved school. Listings are continuously updated. Verify your school's eligibility for funding at the web address included in the Links list on the next page.



more on next page

Veteran Service Organizations

Many veteran and military service organizations (VSOs, MSOs) award scholarships to Surviving children and/or spouses. A list of VSOs can be found in the Links list below.



Non-Profit Organizations

Your Navy Gold Star coordinator's Resource Guide lists many scholarships offered by non-profit organizations. Contact your Navy Gold Star coordinator.



State Education Benefits

Your state may have educational programs for military Survivors to supplement federal benefits. See the Links list below.

Scholarships at Individual Schools, Colleges and Universities

Scholarship assistance for Survivors of deceased service members may be available from individual schools, colleges and universities. Assistance may be need-based. Contact the school's financial aid/assistance office. Find contact information in the Links list below



Links to more information



DEA: <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/education-and-careers/dependents-education-assistance/>.

Fry Scholarship: <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/education-and-careers/fry-scholarship/>.

DEA/Fry Comparison: <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/education-and-careers/>.

VEAP: <https://www.va.gov/education/other-va-education-benefits/veap/>.

MGIB: <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/>.

Post-9/11 GI Bill: <https://www.va.gov/education/transfer-post-9-11-gi-bill-benefits/>.

VA-Approved Schools: <https://www.va.gov/education/choosing-a-school/>.

VSOs/MSOs: <https://www.va.gov/resources/va-accredited-representative-faqs/>.

State Education Benefits: www.military.com/education/money-for-school/state-veteran-benefits.html or <https://www.ed.gov/higher-education/paying-college>

Schools, Colleges and Universities: <https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-scholarships.aspx> and the Department of Education's College Navigator site: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.