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FALL 2025

Education Guide

September 2025

DODEA REVEALS

NEW BLUEPRINT FOR
STUDENT SUCCESS

COVER
TUITION COSTS
with TA Top-Up

EARN YOUR
DEGREE WITH
EDUCATION
ADVANCEMENT
EXAMS

TOP TOOLS FOR
MILITARY KIDS' SUCCESS

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POST-9/11 GI BILL BENEFITS

By meeting service requirements and requesting a transfer, eligible service members can share their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits with spouses or children.





Photo by Michael ODay / DVIDShub.net

Dr. Judith Minor, DoDEA Americas Director for Student Excellence, engages school principals, district superintendents, and Center for Instructional Leadership staff at the Americas Summer Leadership Summit in Peachtree City, GA, turning the 'Blueprint for Continuous Improvement' into actionable strategies via community collaboration to support military-connected families.

DODEA REVEALS BLUEPRINT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

What That Means for DoDEA Americas' Military Family and Kids

Courtesy of Department of Defense Education Activity

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is rolling out a comprehensive five-year strategic plan called "The Blueprint for Continuous Improvement," aimed at enhancing education for military-connected students from pre-kindergarten through high school. The plan launched in July and will run through 2030. It focuses on four core goals designed to support students, educators, and families amid the unique challenges of military life, such as frequent moves and deployments. The four goals are **student excellence**, **school excellence**, **talent excellence** and **organizational excellence**.

For parents and military stakeholders in the Americas region, the blueprint promises a more personalized and resilient educational experience for their children. "This isn't just about test scores; it's about equipping our kids with the skills to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world," said Dr. Judith Minor, DoDEA Americas Director for Student Excellence. By prioritizing student well-being and resilience, alongside academics, the blueprint addresses the realities faced by over 20,000 military-connected students in the region, many of whom transition between schools multiple times during their pre-K-12 years.

At the heart of the blueprint is student excellence, which means tailored support to help every child succeed. Parents can expect a strengthened multi-tiered system of support, offering personalized interventions and enrichments tailored to meet both academic and emotional needs. This includes expanded programs for future-ready skills, such

as career exploration and digital literacy, to ensure smooth transitions during permanent change of station moves. For military kids, this translates to less disruption and more opportunities to build adaptability and lifelong learning habits.

School excellence will elevate classrooms across DoDEA Americas schools, from West Point to Guantanamo Bay. The blueprint invests in high-quality professional development for teachers, allowing them to deliver engaging, differentiated instruction boosting student outcomes. Military stakeholders, including base commanders, family support services, and school advisory committees will see stronger partnerships that align school improvements with community needs, fostering environments where educators are empowered to make a real difference.

Under talent excellence, DoDEA is committing to a top-tier workforce. New employees will benefit from a robust onboarding program, while expanded career pathways and leadership training will help retain talented staff. For parents, this means more consistent, high-caliber educators and administrators who understand the military lifestyle and can provide stable support for their children.

Finally, organizational excellence emphasizes innovation and communication. Families in the Americas region will experience improved engagement through transparent updates and stronger ties with military communities. The blueprint also modernizes the use of technology, including the integration of

ethical AI, to prepare students for a digital future while ensuring safe online environments. "We're building a system that's responsive to families' feedback and ready for tomorrow's challenges," Dr. Judith Minor added.

This strategic plan positions DoDEA as a leader in pre-K-12 education, directly benefiting military families by creating supportive, innovative schools. Parents and stakeholders interested in learning more can visit the DoDEA website or contact their local school for details. With this blueprint, DoDEA is not only addressing today's challenges but also paving the way for military-connected kids to excel well into the future.

DoDEA operates as a field activity of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It is responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and managing pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade educational programs for the Department of Defense. DoDEA operates 161 accredited schools in 9 districts in 11 foreign countries, seven states, Guam, and Puerto Rico, serving over 67,000 military-connected students. DoDEA Americas operates 50 accredited schools across two districts on 16 military installations, including Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard bases in seven states, Puerto Rico and Cuba. Committed to excellence in education, DoDEA fosters well-rounded, lifelong learners, equipping them to succeed in a dynamic world.

For more information, visit <https://www.dodea.edu/about/blueprint-continuous-improvement-2025>

Need Money for Higher Education?

Don't think you can afford college? Think again. In addition to military tuition assistance and Department of Veterans Affairs education programs, numerous loans and opportunities are available to help you fund the next step in your education.

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Federal grants and loans

Check out these grants and loans to help cover education expenses:

- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA**, is the required application from the Department of Education. It determines your eligibility for any form of federal financial aid.
- **Federal Pell Grants**, unlike loans, do not have to be repaid. The grant is typically awarded to an undergraduate student who has not yet earned a bachelor's or professional degree. In some cases, a student enrolled in a post-bachelor's teacher certificate program may receive a Pell Grant.
- **Direct Stafford Loans** are low-interest loans to help cover the cost of higher education at a four-year college or university, community college, or a trade, career or technical school.
- **PLUS loans** are federal loans that eligible graduate or professional degree students and parents of dependent undergraduate students can use to help pay for education expenses.
- **Federal Perkins Loans** are low-interest loans for both undergraduate and graduate students with exceptional financial need.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunities Grant Program, or FSEOG**, provides need-based grants to help low-income undergraduate students finance the cost of higher education. Priority is given to recipients of the Federal Pell Grant.

Colleges and universities

More than 2,600 colleges and universities worldwide offer educational opportunities to military members.

Service Members Opportunity Colleges, or SOC, a group of more than 1,900 postsecondary schools, provides opportunities to service members and their families to complete college degrees as they live the mobile military life.



Military Tuition Assistance Program

The Military Tuition Assistance Program pays up to 100% of tuition expenses for semester credit hours costing \$250 or less per credit hour, or \$166 per quarter hour, if your institution follows a quarter system.

Each Defense Department service branch and the Coast Guard offer active-duty service members financial assistance for voluntary, off-duty education programs. National Guard members and reservists may also be eligible based on their service eligibility and should check with their service for more information.

Classes must be from an accredited two- or four-year institution on or off the installation, or by distance

learning. The service branch will pay the school directly. Service members can find out more information directly from their service branch:

- **Army Tuition Assistance Program** - [https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Tuition-Assistance-\(TA\)](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Tuition-Assistance-(TA))
- **Marine Corps Tuition Assistance Program** - <https://www.marines.com/life-as-a-marine/benefits/education.html>
- **Navy College Program** - <https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/>
- **Air Force Tuition Assistance Program** - <https://www.afpc.af.mil/Career-Management/Military-Tuition-Assistance-Program/>
- **Coast Guard Tuition Assistance Program** - <https://www.forcecom.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/FORCECOM-UNITS/ETQC/Voluntary-Education/Tuition-Assistance/>

Tuition Assistance Top-Up Program

If your college tuition costs more than what's covered by the Defense Department Tuition Assistance program, you may be able to receive more money to help pay for school. The Tuition Assistance Top-Up Program helps service members achieve professional and personal self-development goals, and save money while pursuing their degrees. This funding is through the Department of Veterans Affairs Tuition Assistance Top-Up program.

Veterans and service members may be eligible for Tuition Assistance Top-Up if:

- They are approved for federal tuition assistance.
- They qualify for the Montgomery GI Bill® Active Duty or Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits.
- The cost of the course and fees is more than tuition assistance will cover.

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Education Assistance Program

The NMCRS Education Assistance Program provides financial assistance to eligible Navy and Marine Corps families by providing scholarships and no-interest loans. Awards are provided based on an applicant's financial need. Scholarships range from \$500 to \$3,000, and interest-free loans are available for up to \$4,000 per academic year. This assistance can be used to pay for tuition, books, fees, room and board.

You may be eligible for a scholarship or loan through NMCRS if you are a child (under age 23) of an active duty, retired or deceased sailor or Marine; a spouse of an active duty or retired sailor or Marine; or an active-duty sailor or Marine enrolled in a Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Education Program/Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program loan-only program.

Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers a variety of programs to help service members pay for their education. Unlike the Tuition Assistance Program, the VA education benefits can be used after separating from the military.

- **Post-9/11 GI Bill®** provides aid for college education or on-the-job training for those who served on active duty after Sept. 10, 2001. Benefits include support for college degrees, testing costs, job training, apprenticeships and more. Also, a spouse or child can

use these benefits in certain cases.

- **Montgomery GI Bill® Active Duty**, sometimes known as Chapter 30, provides education benefits to service members and veterans with at least two years of active duty.
- **Montgomery GI Bill® Selected Reserve** provides education and training benefits to members of the reserve.
- **Rogers STEM Scholarship** is for veterans and Fry scholars who have or will soon exhaust their benefits and are currently enrolled in a STEM degree program or are seeking a teaching certification.

Other ways to help pay for higher education

Service members may be able to save time and money by earning college credit through their military experience. The Joint Services Transcript for Military Personnel describes military schooling and work history in civilian terms, making it easier for colleges to read and recommend credits.

In addition to military benefits, service members may be eligible for grants, loans, tax credits and deductions that can help make education affordable. Direct Subsidized Loans and Direct Unsubsidized Loans are government loans for students enrolled at least half-time. Recipients repay these loans after they graduate, leave school or drop below half-time status.

Tax credits and deductions

- **American Opportunity Tax Credit** is a yearly credit of up to \$2,500 per student for certain expenses paid during the first four years of college.
- **Lifetime Learning Credit** is a credit of up to \$2,000 per year for undergraduate, graduate and professional students, for an unlimited number of years.
- **Tuition and fee deductions** can reduce taxable income by up to \$4,000.
- **Student loan interest deduction** is up to \$2,500 of the interest paid on certain student loans.

Resources to help with postsecondary planning

Here are some useful resources to help you plan your postsecondary education:

- **TA DECIDE**, a tool offered by the Defense Department, helps you make informed decisions about your postsecondary education. It allows you to compare information about educational institutions and costs.
- **The College Financing Plan** is a consumer tool that education institutions use to notify students about their financial aid packages. It helps you compare costs at higher education institutions to make informed decisions about where to attend school.
- **GI Bill® Comparison Tool** helps you compare Veterans Affairs-approved institutions and the GI benefits available, as well as review other information to choose the education program that works best for you.
- **College Navigator** provides a search feature, builds a list of schools for comparison and pinpoints school locations, degree programs and lengths of degree programs to help you make the best decision about your postsecondary education.

Service members and military families can contact Military OneSource education specialty consultants for one-on-one guidance on postsecondary education. Call 800-342-9647 or live chat to schedule your consultation.



FROM MILITARY ASPIRATIONS TO LEADERSHIP ROLES: THE IMPACT OF THE MINUTEMEN SCHOLARSHIP

By Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Oposnow 63rd Readiness Division, Courtesy of the U.S. Army Reserve

The U.S. Army Reserve's Minuteman Scholarship has become a significant tool in recruiting and developing future military leaders. Two individuals deeply involved in this initiative, Jordyn Hoit, an ROTC cadet, and James Bernet, an Army Reserve Ambassador from Nevada, offer insight into how the scholarship shapes the lives of recipients and the broader community.

Jordyn Hoit, who grew up in Escondido, California, began considering her future as early as middle school. She initially aimed to attend a military academy like West Point but later decided that a traditional college experience was a better fit for her. This decision was influenced by her desire for independence and a more conventional college life, something she felt was not fully available at a service academy.

After scoring well on the ASVAB, Hoit was introduced to the Minuteman Scholarship by her recruiter who connected her with James Bernet. The scholarship was officially presented to her during a high school football game in Escondido, marking a significant milestone in her educational and military journey.

The Minuteman Scholarship provides full tuition or room and board, a monthly stipend, and the opportunity to serve as a commissioned officer in the Army Reserve. For Hoit, it allowed her to pursue her educational goals while maintaining a commitment to military service. She just completed her first year at Hofstra University, where she is majoring in criminology. Post-graduation, she plans to join the FBI, a career path where military and law enforcement experience is highly valued.

One of the key moments in Hoit's journey was her participation in the recent educators' retreat at Naval Base Coronado, organized by James Bernet. During this event, Hoit shared her personal story of how she navigated her path from high school in Escondido to becoming a cadet at Hofstra University, highlighting the impact of the Minuteman Scholarship on her educational and career aspirations.

Speaking to an audience of 40 educators from the Valley Center Pauma School District, Hoit detailed her decision-making process, the challenges she faced, and how the scholarship provided her with the resources and support to pursue her goals. Her story was not just a personal reflection; it also served as a powerful example for educators, many of whom may not have had direct experience with the military or an understanding of the opportunities it offers.

For many students, especially those without family members in the military, navigating the complexities of military scholarships and service options can be challenging. Hoit's presentation helped bridge that gap, providing educators with the knowledge they need to guide their students toward opportunities like the Minuteman Scholarship.

"Not everyone has someone in their life who can explain what the Army Reserve is and how it can fit into a college and career plan," Hoit explained. "By sharing my story, I hope to make that information more accessible to students who might not have considered the military as an option."

James Bernet, an Army Reserve Ambassador from Henderson, Nevada, has spent years promoting

the Minuteman Scholarship and guiding students like Hoit through the application process. Bernet, who holds a degree from John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, is deeply invested in supporting military initiatives and youth education.

In addition to his role as an ambassador, Bernet is the President of BCA Cares, LLC, and has founded and chaired several organizations, including the San Diego Army Advisory Council and the West Point Admissions Project. His involvement in numerous philanthropic efforts, such as Fleet Week San Diego, the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Diego, and various veterans' organizations, reflects his commitment to community service and support for military families.

Bernet's efforts include organizing events like the educators' retreat, where he and Hoit presented to school board

members and educators. The retreat aimed to provide educators with a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities available through the Army, including the Minuteman Scholarship.

Bernet's work extends beyond recruitment; he actively engages with local communities and school districts to raise awareness about the scholarship and military service opportunities. As a result of the educators' retreat, the district committed to several initiatives, including hosting ASVAB testing and an Army-led Senior Day event.

Bernet also emphasizes the value of having Army Reserve Soldiers, rather than just recruiters, speak at events. He believes that hearing from current soldiers provides students and educators with a more authentic perspective on military life.

"The presence of Army Reserve Soldiers at events can make the information more relatable," Bernet noted. "They offer a real-world view of what it's like to serve as a citizen-soldier."

The Minuteman Scholarship is designed to support students who wish to serve in the Army Reserve while pursuing higher education. It offers financial benefits and a clear pathway to commissioning as an officer. According to Bernet, the scholarship is not competitive in the same way other ROTC scholarships are, which makes it accessible to a wider range of students.

As Jordyn Hoit continues her academic and military journey, she represents one of the many students who have benefited from the scholarship. Her story, along with Bernet's advocacy, highlights the scholarship's role in shaping the next generation of Army Reserve leaders.

The Minuteman Scholarship, and the efforts of individuals like Hoit and Bernet, contribute to the broader mission of the Army Reserve, ensuring that students across the country can serve while achieving their educational goals. Bernet's commitment to fostering these opportunities aligns with his broader mission to encourage young people to make positive choices, engage in their communities, and pursue both educational and service-oriented paths.



Photo courtesy of Army.mil

Jordyn Hoit, an ROTC cadet from Escondido, California, has been profoundly influenced by the U.S. Army Reserve's Minuteman Scholarship, which she received during a high school football game in her hometown. The scholarship has allowed her to attend Hofstra University, where she is majoring in criminology, while also committing to serve as a commissioned officer in the Army Reserve.



Back-To-School Educational Resources for Military Families

By Dawn Smith,
Courtesy of Military OneSource

Frustration and a PCS often go hand in hand, and the irritation can feel personal when it relates to your children's schooling transition, regardless of a public, private or homeschool education. It's overwhelming to research school options from afar and feel confident you've made the right choice. Education is a high-stakes journey for most military families, so preparing for a transition can feel like a part-time job.

Gratefully, there are multiple avenues for helping parents find the best fit; it just takes some time and possibly some one-on-one help to find exactly what you're looking for. If a PCS is in your future, you'll want to prepare for your next back-to-school journey as soon as possible. These resources will put you on the right path.

Student Liaison Officers

As a parent, one of the most worrisome parts of a PCS is deciding what type of education or school location best fits your family. You may have heard of a Student Liaison Officer (SLO). They

work for the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity. Their job is to help military families transition into new school settings, whether the kids attend on or off base or homeschool.

One of the best programs your SLO can refer you to is a youth sponsorship opportunity in your area. Often, when kids are paired with other kids attending the same school or living in the same neighborhood, friendships blossom quickly. It's always comforting to walk into a new school already knowing at least one or two kids.

You can find a SLO at most installations, and they'll also assist with:

- School selection
- Transfer credits
- Connection to local schools, public and private
- Alternative schooling and referral support
- Deployment strategies
- Parent workshops

Military OneSource has similar help available. Its education consultants are available through the website and by phone. They will discuss

education options like school profile reviews, tutoring and financial assistance.

Educational Support Programs

Many parents consider translating education records between schools and finding educational support services in a new town the most challenging part of a PCS transition, so it's helpful for military parents to become familiar with two integral education support programs. Your SLO is a good resource for learning more about each.

Military Interstate Children's Compact

Because military families were struggling with the cohesiveness of education requirements between schools after PCS relocations, the DoDEA and the National Center for Interstate Compacts and the Council of State Governments created the Military Interstate Children's Compact. This agreement encourages all 50 states' education systems to provide seamless transfers between schools by accepting similar classes and testing.

Although the program has helped, each state dictates the details of its agreement, so it is up to parents to learn the program's ins and outs and work with MIC representatives to connect the dots.

Military Child Education Coalition

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is widely known as one of the leaders in military kids' educational support. Its website is packed with resources to master school transitions. MCEC employs Military Student Consultants at many of the biggest installations to help families settle into new homes and schools. Specifically, MCEC can assist with:

- Enrollment
- Credit transfer
- Extracurricular activities
- MIC3 implementation
- Graduation requirements
- Individualized Education Programs
- Special education services

MCEC is also the national advocate for the Purple

Star School designation, which you may have heard about. These schools have completed training and receive support to welcome military kids nationwide. You can expect these schools to have military-related clubs and activities to quickly help your students become part of the community.

You don't have to take on a PCS school transition alone. There are many resources available to help you feel confident about the move. Don't forget, Military OneSource always offers access to confidential counseling if you think your family would benefit after a relocation.

Blog Brigade unites military spouses by creating a community built on shared experiences and mutual support. Navigating the complexities of military life can be challenging, but you don't have to do it alone. Military OneSource offers valuable resources focused on well-being, readiness, and connection.



AN EXPLANATION OF EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT EXAMS

Courtesy of Military OneSource

You've been tested before and have the determination it takes to study hard and be prepared. Doing so on education advancement exams, which assess your skills, can help you earn your degree faster. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, or DANTES, offers free or discounted tests for military members. By learning which tests to tackle and how best to prepare, you'll be ready to master exam time and be one step closer to your higher education goals.

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support exams

Completing particular DANTES-sponsored exams allows you to earn credits toward a college degree so you may be able to get your degree faster. Here are the basics on these tests.

- **ACT.** The ACT is designed to assess general educational development and measure performance of intellectual tasks required of a college student. The ACT is composed of four academic tests that measure academic development in english, mathematics, reading and science. Funding eligibility for service members varies based on type of testing location.
- **College-Level Examination Program.** The CLEP exam allows you to test out of 33 test titles in subjects where you may have gained knowledge such as from work, education or military experience. Administration and examination fees are DANTES-funded for eligible service members for the first attempt on all titles only.
- **DSST, formerly known as the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests.** Prometric's DSST test is a form of prior-learning assessment offered via 38 college-subject exams. This nationally recognized credit-by-exam program grants college credit for learning outside of the classroom like on-the-job training, military experience or independent study. DANTES funds fees for the first attempt on all DSST titles only, for eligible service members.
- **General Education Development Tests.** The GED test consists of four content areas designed to measure the high school level of adult learners who are not high school graduates. The content areas are math, science, social studies and language arts.



DANTES reimburses the test fee one time for eligible service members.

- **Graduate Management Admission Test.** The GMAT is available through some college and university test centers. This computer-adaptive test includes verbal, quantitative and analytical writing questions. The GMAT is reimbursable (one time) for eligible service members.
- **Graduate Record Examinations.** The GRE is a computer-based test available through select college and university test centers. DANTES will pay for one GRE General and one GRE Subject exam per lifetime for eligible service members.
- **PRAXIS I and II.** The PRAXIS I is a Pre-Professional Skills Test, or PPST, with three separate subject-area tests in reading, math and writing. Some states require students to pass the PPST before starting a teacher education program, or as a teacher-licensing exam. The PRAXIS II is a timed subject assessment focused on principles of learning and teaching. The exam offers more than 100 test subjects. Some states require you to pass this exam before teaching certain subject areas. Both PRAXIS exams are reimbursable

one time for eligible service members.

- **SAT.** The SAT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The SAT assesses critical thinking skills needed for success in college and future career success. The test is based on knowledge developed through coursework in the following areas: reading, writing, language and math. Funding eligibility for service members varies based on type of testing location.

Test prep scams

Protect yourself as you prepare and sign up for these exams. Be careful to avoid scams that could potentially waste your time and money. Keep an eye out for any test prep program that attempts to:

- Pressure you to buy test prep materials for exams you don't plan to take
- Give you purchasing credit with a third-party vendor
- Contact you at home with direct sales
- Promise college credit without enrolling in a college or university
- Include dictionaries or encyclopedias on book lists

Before you spend your hard-earned money on any test prep materials, contact your education services specialist. A specialist may be able to guide you to no-cost or low-cost materials through the education center, installation library or local college bookstores.

Your education is a worthwhile investment of both time and money. Save a little of both by taking advantage of the available DANTES-sponsored exams. Get more information on these exams at www.dantes.doded.mil.

GET MORE MONEY FOR SCHOOL THROUGH THE TUITION ASSISTANCE TOP-UP PROGRAM



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Verlin K. Harper, radio-frequency transmission systems operator, instructs Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) general military course cadets on expeditionary skills at N.C. State University. Harper uses the North Carolina Tuition Assistance Program, allowing him to be apart of N.C. State University's ROTC program.

Does your college tuition cost more than what's covered by the Department of Defense (DoD) Tuition Assistance (TA) program? Find out if you can get more money to help pay for school through the Tuition Assistance Top-Up program.

Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE TOP-UP?

You may be eligible for Tuition Assistance Top-Up if you're approved for federal TA and you meet both of these requirements.

Both of these must be true:

- You qualify for Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD) or Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, and
- The cost of the course and

fees is more than TA will cover

WHO'S COVERED?

Veterans and service members

WHAT BENEFITS CAN I GET?

You can get more tuition funding to cover the difference between the full cost of a college course and the amount covered under active-duty TA for up to 36 months.



or charged, one month of entitlement for each payment received that is equal to the full-time monthly GI Bill rate.

Note: The combined amount paid by DoD and Tuition Assistance Top-Up can never be more than the total cost of the course.

IF YOU'RE USING THE POST-9/11 GI BILL

We'll pay back your school the difference between the DoD payment and the authorized (approved) maximum tuition and fees.

This benefit will be charged based on training time no matter how much money you're paid back. Half-time training rates reduce your GI Bill benefit by a half-month for each month you're enrolled.

Note: The Post-9/11 GI Bill will often cover the full cost of tuition and fees, with the same amount of entitlement charged no matter how much is covered by TA. Be sure to

consider your options before deciding to use both of these programs for the same courses. If you use these benefits separately, you're more likely to maximize your educational benefit funding.

WILL IT AFFECT MY GI BILL BENEFITS IF I USE TOP-UP?

Yes. You'll want to think carefully about your situation before applying for benefits through this program. You can talk with your education officer and use the GI Bill Comparison Tool to help you make your decision. If you're going to take more courses after leaving the military, figure out if the GI Bill benefits you have left will cover your needs.

HOW DO I GET THESE BENEFITS?

You'll need to apply for education benefits. Visit <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/> for more information.

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Military Homeschooling on the Rise: Trends & Resources



Natalie Mack, M.Ed,
Founder, Military Homeschoolers Association

Frequent relocations, new schools, and disrupted services have always been traditional reasons military families choose homeschooling. In the Military Homeschoolers Association’s (MHA) 2024 National Survey, 763 families from every branch—both stateside and overseas—reported that homeschooling is not only growing but shows no sign of slowing in 2025. The survey also revealed newer, less traditional reasons.

1. One Curriculum, Any Duty Station

Stats to Know: 64.7% of families in the 2024 MHA National Survey said the military lifestyle—especially frequent PCS moves—was a major reason they chose or continued homeschooling. Each move can mean a new school, new standards, mid-year curriculum shifts, and repeating material in public, private, or DoDEA schools. Homeschooling delivers continuity: the same curriculum is portable from one assignment to the next.

2. Custom Learning, Consistent Support

In the 2024 MHA National Survey, more than 91% of families said a main reason for homeschooling was the freedom to customize

education for a child’s learning needs. Frequent PCS moves often disrupt services, alter IEP plans, and limit consistent access to specialists. Homeschooling allows parents to choose the curriculum, adjust the rigor and pace, and integrate therapies—without having to reestablish support systems at every duty station.

Among families homeschooling a child with special needs, 79.7% reported they were significantly better off at home, citing greater flexibility, consistent routines, and a safe learning environment.

3. Stronger Together: Community Connections

Deployments, frequent relocations, and inconsistent schedules can be stressful to

military families. For many, having access to a supportive homeschool community makes the difference. In the 2024 MHA National Survey, 71.2% of families reported participating in homeschool co-ops or other community groups—finding friendship, resources, and stability no matter where they’re stationed.

4. Learning Environments that Reflect Family Priorities

In the 2024 MHA National Survey, more than 58% of families said their religious affiliation influenced their decision to homeschool. Concerns about bullying and school violence accounted for more than 50% of the respondents. Homeschooling empowers parents to create an environment that reflects

their values, protects their children, and provides ample opportunities for character development.

5. Challenges Acknowledged, Benefits Valued

Families in the 2024 MHA National Survey were candid—homeschooling within the military lifestyle requires effort, especially when balancing deployments, long hours, and frequent transitions. Yet an overwhelming 97.6% said they believe homeschooling gives their children the best path forward.

2025 Trends to Watch in Military Homeschooling

Findings from the 2024 Military Homeschoolers Association (MHA) National Survey point to four key trends shaping the future of military homeschooling.

First, installation-based support is on the rise. At locations such as Fort Belvoir and Fort Bragg, well-run homeschool co-ops—often supported by base chapels—are thriving and serving as models for other communities. Connections with garrison command, child and youth programs (CYP), and school liaison officers (SLOs) are increasingly significant to homeschool success.

Second, families with neurodivergent children are increasingly turning to homeschooling. What once might have been viewed as a barrier is now seen as an opportunity to provide consistent, safe, and individualized education, especially for children whose well-being can be disrupted by frequent moves. Parents are willing to find the external support their child needs and not remain dependent on only one option for success.

Third, advocacy and awareness are gaining momentum. Organizations like MHA are leveraging survey data to engage legislators, the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), and military leadership on critical issues, including overseas access, SLO training, and installation-based resources for homeschoolers.

Finally, SLOs continue to actively seek ways to better support military homeschooling families, from providing resource lists to creating new on-base opportunities for connection and collaboration. Training provided by MHA’s founder, Natalie Mack has been a significant aspect of the school liaison involvement.

What This Means for Curriculum Providers and Homeschool Leaders

Survey data points to several key takeaways for serving the military homeschool community.

Curriculum Flexibility: Military families need programs that are adaptable and easy to use, regardless of location or duty station changes.

Digital Accessibility: Downloadable lesson plans and mobile-friendly platforms allow families to continue learning from hotels, temporary lodging, or overseas bases.

Community Connection: Webinars, mentoring programs, and other networking opportunities are essential for families who relocate every two to three years.

Military life often brings change we can’t control—but, as the MHA survey shows, we can successfully home educate. Homeschooling is no longer a last-resort option; it’s a deliberate, empowering choice for military families worldwide.

Military parents don’t have to compromise their child’s academic growth or emotional well-being. With the right support, resources, community and planning, you can homeschool with confidence—no matter where the next set of orders leads.

For assistance with homeschooling, contact the Military Homeschoolers Association at info@militaryhomeschoolers.org.

Download the full 2024 MHA Military Homeschooling Survey Report here:

<https://militaryhomeschoolers.org/research/>

FISHER HOUSE HELPS MILITARY CHILDREN WITH TUITION



Col. Lakicia R. Stokes, U.S. Army Garrison-Fort Hood commander, Defense Commissary Agency representatives, Fisher House representatives and scholarship recipients pose for a photo after accepting \$2,000 in scholarships from the DeCA and the Fisher House Scholarship for Military Children Program in a ceremony at the Warrior Way Commissary at Fort Hood, Texas.

By Derika Upshaw, Fort Hood Public Affairs

Military family members received \$2,000 in scholarships in July as part of the Fisher House Scholarship program in a ceremony at the Warrior Way Commissary. The Defense Commissary Agency and the Fisher House Foundation partnered to bring the scholarships to military children of active-duty, reserve, retired and deceased service members.

"We have our (representatives) and our vendors who come in and who are part of the Fisher House, and the scholarship is a way to give back to our community and our budding students who are going to be something," said Andrea Kirby, commissary officer for Clear Creek Commissary on Fort Hood.

According to their website, the Fisher House gives out 500 scholarships each academic year across all DeCA locations, and each facility has at least one scholarship recipient where qualified applications are received. This year, Clear Creek Commissary had four recipients and Warrior Way Commissary had six recipients.

The application process is completed online and students are evaluated on their academic achievement, participation in school, community and volunteer activities, work experience and essay.

Madison Jackson, an incoming sophomore at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, and one of the recipients celebrated, explained what her essay was about.

"I believe I wrote on the summer camp that I worked at, Beloved and Beyond," Jackson said. "It's a summer camp for kids and adults with special needs. I've been staffing there for the past two years, and that's really special just because it's a really awesome place that you are able to provide an awesome week during the summer where kids and girls can come together, just know they're loved, both by you and by Christ, and find a place where you're able to be accepted no

matter what your abilities are. And I really love that."

Jackson is pursuing an architectural degree, which she says will take her six to seven years to complete including the degree level and licensures that are needed. "[It] is a lot of time and tuition," she said. "So, this scholarship definitely helps make that a lot more attainable for me, and I really, really appreciate it."

Candace Williams, business manager for the Fort Hood Fisher House, says supporting the scholarships keeps the foundation participating in the military community.

"It really helps that we're able to just partner with the community and different things like this and bring awareness for what the house has done for military members," Williams said. "We appreciate that."

The Fisher House website notes "commissaries are an integral part of the quality of life offered to service members and their families. The Scholarships for Military Children Program was created in recognition of the contributions of military families to the readiness of the fighting force and to celebrate the role of the commissary in the military family community."

Fisher House Scholarships for Military Children Program applications will open in December for the 2026-2027 school year. For more information, visit fisherhouse.org/programs/scholarship-programs/scholarships-for-military-children/faq.

TRANSFER YOUR POST-9/11 GI BILL BENEFITS



Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Can I transfer my Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits?

You may be able to transfer your Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to a dependent family member if you're on active duty or in the Selected Reserve and you meet all of these requirements.

All of these must be true:

- You've completed at least 6 years of service on the date your request is approved, and
- You agree to add 4 more years of service, and
- The person getting benefits is enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS)

Note: If you received a Purple Heart, you don't need to meet a service requirement. But you'll need to request to transfer your benefits while you're still on active duty.

How do I transfer my benefits?

While you're still on active duty, you'll need to request a Transfer of Education Benefits (TEB) from the DOD through milConnect. You can't request a TEB from VA. Visit milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/ for more information.

How does my dependent apply to use the transferred benefits?

Your dependent can apply online or by mail.

To apply online, your eligible dependent must be signed in to their own Login.gov or ID.me account. If your dependent doesn't have an account, we'll prompt them to create one when they start filling out the online application.

Note: You can't use your online account to apply on behalf of your dependent. We'll deny the application. (You'll know you're logged into your own account if we're displaying your personal information instead of your dependent's information.)

If your dependent is under 18 years old

You'll need to apply on their behalf using a PDF version of the Application

for Family Member to Use Transferred Benefits (VA Form 22-1990e).

Get VA Form 22-1990e to download by visiting va.gov/find-forms/about-form-22-1990e/.

Mail the completed application to the address listed on the form for your VA regional processing office.

You can also submit the PDF form for them by uploading it in one of these ways:

- Use QuickSubmit through the AccessVA portal
- Use Ask VA

What benefits can my dependents get?

Your dependents may be able to get money to pay for these expenses:

- Tuition
- Housing
- Books and supplies
- Fees for national standardized tests
- Fees for licensing and certifications

Check the current payment rates for transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/education-and-careers/transferred-gi-bill-benefits/rates/.

You can request to transfer up to a total of 36 months of your remaining education benefits to your dependents.

When can my dependents use the transferred benefits?

Spouses

Your spouse can use these benefits right away whether you're on active duty or have separated from service.

- If you separated from active duty before January 1, 2013, your spouse can use these benefits for up to 15 years after your separation from active duty.
- If you separated from active duty on or after January 1, 2013, your spouse can use these benefits at any time. There's no time limit on the benefits.

Note: Your spouse doesn't qualify for monthly housing allowance while you're on active duty.

Children

A dependent child can start to use these benefits only after you've finished at least 10 years of service. They can use these benefits while you're on active duty or after you've separated from service.

The child must meet these requirements to use the benefits:

- They have a high school diploma (or a certificate that's equivalent) or they're at least 18 years old
- They're younger than 26 years old

Note: The child may qualify for the monthly housing allowance even when you're on active duty.

Can I cancel or change my transferred benefits?

Yes. You can cancel (revoke) or change the transfer of any benefits that we haven't awarded to your dependent yet.

You'll need to use milConnect for these changes:

- To change the number of months you're transferring to your dependent
- To transfer benefits back to yourself
- To cancel the transfer of any benefits

If you're still on active duty, you can also request to transfer benefits to additional dependents.

What if one of my dependents doesn't use their transferred benefits?

You can request to transfer your dependent's benefits back to yourself or another eligible dependent.

You'll need to make the request in milConnect. DOD doesn't transfer the benefits back automatically.

Note: Your dependent must be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) before making the transfer in milConnect. To

enroll in DEERS, they'll need to visit a Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification System (RAPIDS) office and bring 2 forms of identification (ID). One of the forms of ID must have their photo.

Find a RAPIDS location near you by visiting idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/locator.

What happens if I don't complete the service requirement for transferring benefits?

If you separate from service before you meet the service requirement to transfer benefits, your dependents may still be eligible to use the benefits in certain situations.

Your dependents may be eligible if you separated from service for any of these reasons:

- You get sick or injured while serving in the military—or your service makes an existing condition worse
- You receive a hardship discharge
- You have a medical condition that prevents you from performing military duties
- You have a disability that existed before your service
- You lose your position during a reduction in force

If you die before completing your service requirement for transferring benefits, your dependents may still be eligible to use the benefits.

If you separate from service for other reasons, your dependents won't be eligible to use transferred benefits. And you'll owe us for education, training, or fees we've already paid for your dependents. We'll return the months of transferred benefits back to you.

Get more information

For questions about eligibility, the status of your transfer request, and how to use the Transfer of Education Benefits (TEB) online tool, contact your branch of service.

WHAT'S NEW FOR THE 2026-27 FAFSA® FORM?



Courtesy of the Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education announced major improvements are coming to the 2026–27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) experience.

Whether you’re a student, parent, counselor, or higher ed professional, these changes are designed to make the federal student aid process faster, simpler, and more user-friendly. Here’s what to expect with the rollout of the new 2026–27 FAFSA form that will be released by Oct. 1.

FAFSA Beta Launch Starts

In early August, a select group of students were given access to the 2026–27 FAFSA form through a nationwide beta testing phase. This early launch gives the department a chance to identify and fix technical issues before the form goes live.

The beta testers include students supported by school districts, community-based organizations, and colleges.

These groups will host both in-person and virtual events to guide students and their families through the actual FAFSA process. Department staff will also be on-site and online to offer support and collect feedback.

In late August/early September, more students will be invited to join the beta phase, and any current or aspiring student will be able to request it directly at StudentAid.gov.

What’s New in the 2026–27 FAFSA Form?

The 2026–27 FAFSA form comes with two major improvements:

- **Instant Identity Verification:** A new StudentAid.gov account will now be verified immediately with the Social Security Administration—no more waiting up to three days.
- **Simplified Contributor Process:** Students will only need a contributor’s email address to invite them to fill out the FAFSA form. No more entering sensitive personal information to get started.

These updates reflect industry best practices from the tech world—faster, safer, and less stressful for students and families.

Meet the Upgraded Aidan: FAFSA Help, with Generative AI

FAFSA help is getting a serious upgrade. The department has improved its virtual assistant, Aidan®, with new generative AI technology—the same kind of tech that powers smart chatbots.

Now available 24/7, Aidan can quickly answer a wide range of questions about federal student aid. In fact, early results show that 90% of general questions are now resolved directly by the virtual assistant—getting users instant answers and freeing up phone lines for complex inquiries.

It’s part of a bigger push by the department to modernize student aid services, making them faster and more accessible for everyone.

Staying Transparent and Engaged

The department has also prioritized public input throughout the process. Since the 60-day comment period wrapped up in April, and a second round of feedback ended in mid-June, Federal Student Aid has reviewed more than 2,000 public comments and made more than 50 changes to the 2026–27 form. These efforts show a clear commitment to listening to students, families, and partners as the new FAFSA form takes shape.

The bottom line: Big changes are on the way—and they’re all aimed at making the FAFSA process clearer, quicker, and more accessible for everyone. Whether you’re applying for the first time or helping others through the process, now’s the time to get ready for the future of federal student aid.

Visit fafsa.gov for more information about the 2026–27 FAFSA form, the beta launch, and more.

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WHAT IS THE FRY SCHOLARSHIP?

Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Am I eligible for Fry Scholarship benefits?

You may be eligible for Fry Scholarship benefits if you're the child or surviving spouse of a service member or member of the Selected Reserve who died on or after September 11, 2001, and who fits one of the descriptions listed here.

One of these must be true of the service member or member of the Selected Reserve:

- The service member died in the line of duty while serving on active duty, or
- The member of the Armed Services died from a service-connected disability within 120 days of being discharged from active duty or released from duty, or
- The member of the Selected Reserve died in the line of duty other than active duty, or
- The member of the Selected Reserve died from a service-connected disability

Note: If your parent or spouse was a member of the Selected Reserve who died in the line of duty "other than active duty," this means they were a member of the Reserve serving on active duty for training or inactive duty training. This term doesn't include Army and Air National Guard members who were on state orders (sometimes called "State Active Duty").

If you're the child of a service member:

- You can be married or unmarried.
- One of these must be true, whichever comes first: You're at least 18 years old or you graduated from high school (or you have a GED).
- If you're receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), you'll need to give up those payments when you start to use the Fry Scholarship.

Can I use both the Fry Scholarship and DEA Benefits?

- If your parent was a service member who died in the line of duty before August 1, 2011, you may qualify for both the Fry Scholarship and the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program. But you can use only one program at a time. We cap combined DEA and Fry Scholarship benefits at 81 months of full-time training.
- If your parent was a service member who died in the line of duty on or after August 1, 2011, you may use both the Fry Scholarship and DEA only if you qualify for DEA under a different event. You can use only one program at a time. We cap combined DEA and Fry Scholarship benefits at 48 months of full-time training.

Is there a time limit for me to use this benefit?

- If your parent was a service member who died before January 1, 2013, you're eligible for the Fry Scholarship until you're 33 years old. But if you turned 18, graduated from high school, or got your GED after January 1, 2013, there's no time limit for using this benefit.
- If your parent was a service member who died on or after January 1, 2013, there's no time limit for using this benefit.
- If your parent was a member of the Selected Reserve who died in the line of duty other than active duty or from a service-connected disability, there's no time limit for using this benefit.

If you're the surviving spouse of a service member:

- 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, we may restore those benefits for you 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.

- If you're receiving DIC, you can still get those payments while using the Fry Scholarship.

Fry Scholarship rates for school and training programs

Effective August 1, 2025, to July 31, 2026

The amounts listed here are the maximum amounts we'll pay this academic year for each type of school or training program.

- **Public institution of higher learning** (like a state university or community college): We'll pay the net tuition and mandatory fees. You may be able to get in-state tuition rates at a public school even if you haven't lived in the state where the school is located.
- **Private institution of higher learning:** We'll pay the net tuition and mandatory fees up to \$29,920.95.
- **Foreign institution of higher learning** (a college or university, whether public or private, in a country outside the U.S.): We'll pay the net tuition and mandatory fees up to \$29,920.95 in U.S. dollars.
- **Non-college degree programs** (specific training programs like HVAC repair, truck driving, EMT, or beautician school): We'll pay the net tuition and mandatory fees up to \$29,920.95.
- **Flight training** (a non-degree certificate or rating program): We'll pay the net tuition and mandatory fees up to \$17,097.67.
- **Correspondence school** (usually courses provided by mail that you complete at your own pace): We'll pay the net tuition and mandatory fees up to \$14,533.00 for surviving spouses using the Fry Scholarship.

Which schools can I attend using the Fry Scholarship?

There are many schools with approved programs that you can use under the Fry Scholarship. Make sure we've approved the program you're interested in at the school you'd like to attend. You can use our GI Bill Comparison Tool to find out which schools have programs we've approved.

You can also contact the school's certifying official to ask them which of the school's programs we've approved.

How do I apply for a Fry Scholarship?

You can apply in 1 of these 2 ways.

Option 1: Apply online

Apply for VA education benefits for dependents online at va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/education-and-careers/apply-for-dea-fry-form-22-5490/introduction.

Note: After you apply, tell the certifying official at your school that you applied for VA education benefits. Ask them to submit your enrollment information online.

Option 2: Apply by mail

Fill out a Dependents' Application for VA Education Benefits (VA Form 22-5490).

If you've already chosen a school, mail your completed form to the regional processing office in the state where your school or training program is.

Find your regional processing office address

Then, tell the certifying official at your school that you applied for VA education benefits. Ask them to submit your enrollment information online.

If you haven't chosen a school yet, mail your completed form to the regional processing office in the state where you live.

Find your regional processing office address

When you choose a school, you'll need to tell the certifying official at your school that you applied for VA education benefits. Ask them to submit your enrollment information online.





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