

Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program Tier 2 Stipend Fact Sheet

General Description and Purpose

The Tier 2 Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) is a Commonwealth of Virginia program that provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of military service in an armed conflict. Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, or the Virginia National Guard. Armed conflict includes military operations against terrorism or as the result of a terrorist act, a peacekeeping mission, or any armed conflict.

***NOTE:** A Veteran's 90-100% permanent disability must have been directly caused by the Veteran's involvement in: 1) military operations against terrorism; 2) a peacekeeping mission; 3) a terrorist act; 4) an armed conflict. The service-connected disability cannot have been incurred during active duty that coincides with, but was not the direct result of, one of the listed events/missions.*

The purpose of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program is to provide undergraduate or other postsecondary education free of tuition and all required fees. A stipend to offset the cost of room, board, books, and supplies also may be available, contingent on funding. Benefits are available for up to four academic years.

Eligibility

The eligible student must be:

- 1) Accepted by and enrolled in a Virginia public college or university; and
- 2) a. A spouse of a qualifying military service member; or
b. A child, between the ages of 16 and 29, inclusive, of a qualifying military service member.

The qualifying military service member is one who meets at least one criterion in each of the following four areas.

1) Served on active duty in:

- a. US Armed Forces;
- b. US Armed Forces Reserve; or
- c. Virginia National Guard.

2) Must have total and permanent or at least 90% permanent service-connected disability that coincides with:

- a. Military operations against terrorism;
- b. A peacekeeping mission;
- c. Active duty as a result of a terrorist act; or
- d. Any armed conflict.

3) While serving active duty*:

- a. Was killed;
- b. Was missing in action;
- c. Was prisoner of war; or
- d. Became permanently disabled or at least 90 percent disabled due to such service and is now a veteran.

** Please refer to the note listed under "General Description and Purpose"*

4) Have one of the following qualifying statuses:

- a. Virginia domicile at time of entering service or called up from reserves;
- b. Virginia domicile or physical presence in Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to student applying for admission to the institution;
- c. If deceased, was a Virginia domicile or had physical presence in Virginia on, and for at least five years prior to, his death;
- d. In the case of a qualifying child, is deceased and the surviving parent had been, at some point previous to marrying the deceased military member, a Virginia domicile for at least five years or is and has been a Virginia domicile or has had physical presence in Virginia for at least five years prior to student's application for admission; or
- e. In the case of a qualified spouse, is deceased and the surviving spouse had been, at some time previous to marrying the deceased military spouse, a Virginia domicile for at least five years or is and has been a Virginia domicile or has had physical presence in Virginia for at least five years prior to his or her admission application.

Benefits**Tuition/fee waiver**

Eligible students, as confirmed by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), are guaranteed waiver of all tuition and mandatory fees at a Virginia public college or university regardless of degree program or enrollment level.

Note: Mandatory fees are those fees incurred after tuition is charged and does not include application or enrollment fees.

Stipend for eligible Tier 2 Students

In addition, as funds are available, eligible Tier 2 students may receive a stipend to offset other educational expenses incurred by the student, such as room, board, books, and supplies. Please note that the stipend is not available for the advance purchase of books.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) administers the stipend benefit in conjunction with DVS and participating Virginia public institutions of higher education.

The current maximum annual stipend amount is \$1,900, allocated to fall and spring terms according to the stipend schedule above.

| Enrollment Level | Credit Hours as of end of add/drop | | Term Amount |
|------------------|------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| | Undergraduate | Graduate | |
| Full-Time | 12+ | 9+ | 950 |
| ¾-Time | 9-11 | 7-8 | 720 |
| Half-Time | 6-8 | 5-6 | 480 |
| <Half-Time | 1-5 | 1-4 | 240 |

Stipend priority funding system for fall and spring stipends

Because there may not be sufficient funding to make full VMSDEP stipends to all eligible students, a priority funding system will be used to determine the order and amount of stipends. Students in the Priority 1 category will receive term amounts based on enrollment level as specified in the stipend schedule shown above. If funds are available after Priority 1 students are awarded, Priority 2 students will be considered for either a full or reduced stipend, depending on funding levels. Each subsequent priority level of students then will be accordingly considered accordingly for a stipend, if funding is available.

The priority categories and dates are as follows:

- **Priority 1 Date: December 31**
Includes students enrolled for the fall term whose enrollment confirmation was entered into the VMSDEP portal by their home institution by December 31 of the award year; these students will receive an amount based on the above stipend schedule.
- **Priority 2 Date: February 1**
Includes students enrolled for the fall or spring term whose enrollment confirmation was entered into the VMSDEP portal by their home institution between January 1 of the award year and February 1 of the award year; these students will receive an amount based on enrollment level and available funding.
- **Priority 3 Date: March 15**
Includes students enrolled for the fall or spring term whose enrollment confirmation was entered into the VMSDEP portal by their home institution between February 2 and March 15 of the award year; these students will receive an amount based on enrollment level and available funding.
- **Priority 4 Date: May 1**
Includes students enrolled for the fall or spring term whose enrollment confirmation was entered into the VMSDEP portal by their home institution between March 16 and May 1 of the award year; these students will be considered if funding is available and in order of institutional enrollment confirmation.
- **Priority 5 Date: May 1**
Includes students enrolled for the summer term whose enrollment confirmation was entered into the VMSDEP portal by their home institution between March 16 and May 1 of the award year; these students will be considered if funding is available and in order of institutional enrollment confirmation. Students receiving summer stipends must have remaining eligibility (e.g., the student must not have been awarded the full annual stipend during the fall and spring terms).

If funding is insufficient to provide the full stipend amount based on student and enrollment levels, stipends will be reduced proportionately for all students within the same priority level. SCHEV anticipates awarding Priority 1 and 2 students in 2023-24; SCHEV also anticipates stipends for Priority 3 and/or Priority 4 students will not be funded or the stipend amount will be severely reduced. Finally, SCHEV does not anticipate funding Priority 5 (summer) stipends, but will review in April to make a final determination.

No stipends can be funded once the annual deadline for requesting disbursement of funds to institutions has passed or once program funding has been exhausted, whichever comes first.

Stipend restrictions

The following restrictions apply to the stipend:

- 1) Stipends are based on available funding and are awarded according to the above priority system.
- 2) The stipend is not available for noncredit courses, which include courses taken for audit.
- 3) For purposes of determining the stipend amount, the enrollment level is determined as of the end of the institution's census date (end of add/drop period); credit hours added after that date may not be included in the student's enrollment level.
- 4) A student may receive the stipend through one institution only – the home institution selected by the student in the portal; the stipend amount is based on the combined enrollment. Note that the student remains eligible for the waiver of tuition and fees at each institution even if enrolled at multiple participating institutions.

- 5) The maximum amount of the VMSDEP stipend, when combined with “other scholarships, grants, and waivers” (i.e. other gift aid), cannot exceed the student’s cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, etc.). Other gift aid includes but is not limited to athletic or academic scholarships, tuition waivers, veteran’s benefits, etc.

Example: John Smith is enrolled full-time for both fall and spring terms. His room, board, book, supply, and other expenses total \$15,000. He expects to receive a \$5,000 VMSDEP tuition and fee waiver, a \$5,550 Pell Grant, a \$450 SEOG Grant, and a \$3,000 institutional grant – a total of \$14,000 in gift aid. Expenses (\$15,000) minus expected gift aid (\$14,000) equals \$1,000. Because the amount of the VMSDEP stipend combined with other gift aid cannot exceed expenses, his annual VMSDEP stipend would be reduced to \$1,000.

- 6) If a student withdraws from college after the census date, the stipend is adjusted by a percentage equivalent to the tuition refund policy in effect at the institution.
Example: John Smith is receiving a \$480 stipend for the spring term. He withdraws from the institution at the point where a student would be liable for 50% of charges. John is eligible to retain 50% of his stipend, or \$240.
- 7) If a student is allowed to retroactively drop one or more courses after the census date, the student’s stipend amount is recalculated based on the current number of enrolled credit hours.
- 8) No stipends will be awarded after the cut off for fiscal year disbursement requests has passed.

Renewal

Benefits are limited to a total of eight semesters, equivalent to four academic years; however, benefits do not have to be used in four consecutive years, allowing for a break or breaks in a student’s education. The stipend is contingent upon available annual funding and the student’s eligibility status as reflected in the portal.

Stipend Process

- 1) The student submits to DVS their VMSDEP application using the myVMSDEP portal.
Information about the program and the link to the portal can be found online at:
<http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/veterans-benefits.shtml>; contact information:
VMSDEP Office
Phone: (804) 225-2083
Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- 2) DVS reviews the application, determines eligibility, and updates the portal with the student’s status.
- 3) The student’s institution confirms the student’s enrollment information as of the term’s drop/add date in the portal and enters the information necessary to determine stipend eligibility.
- 4) SCHEV confirms the student’s final stipend amount for the term, and requests disbursement of funds to the institution approximately four to six weeks into the term.
- 5) The institution applies the funds to the student’s account.
- 6) Funds are first applied to institutional direct charges, such as room and board. Disbursements made by the institution to the student, if applicable, are then subject to the institution’s student refund policy.
- 7) If the student withdraws after the census date, the stipend amount will be prorated based on the institution’s tuition refund policy.
- 8) If a student is allowed to retroactively drop one or more courses after the census date, the student’s stipend amount is recalculated based on the current number of enrolled credit hours.

Authorizing Language

Code of Virginia § 23.1-608: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title23.1/chapter6/section23.1-608/>

2021 Virginia Act of Assembly, Chapter 552

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- E.1. Out of this appropriation, \$2,130,000 the first year and \$2,280,000 the second year from the general fund is designated to support the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents program, § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia, to provide up to a \$2,200 annual stipend to offset the costs of room, board, books and supplies for qualified survivors and dependents of military service members.*
- 2. The amount of the stipend is an estimate depending on the number of students eligible under § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia. Changes that increase or decrease the grant amount shall be determined by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.*
- 3. The Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, shall allocate these funds to public institutions of higher education on behalf of students qualifying under this provision.*
- 4. Each institution of higher education shall report the number of recipients for this program to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia by April 1 of each year. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall report this information to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by May 15 of each year.*
- 5. The Department of Veterans Services shall consult with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia prior to the dissemination of any information related to the financial benefits provided under this program.*

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- C.1. Notwithstanding § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia, the department shall provide the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia the information these schools need to administer the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependent Education Program. The department shall retain the responsibility to certify the eligibility of those who apply for financial aid under this program.*
- 2. No surviving spouse or child may receive the education benefits provided by § 23.1-608, Code of Virginia, and funded by this or similar state appropriations, for more than four years or its equivalent.*