



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242 Fax: 605-773-5380
<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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For more information, contact: Audry Ricketts (South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs) at 605-773-8242 or audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

SDDVA Secretary Whitlock's February Column – Investing in America's Future

South Dakota is the best state in the nation for veterans to live and work. And the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to providing veterans with a seamless transition from military service to sustainable civilian employment.

Education looks different for everyone, and it is important that veterans understand and utilize their GI Bill® benefits in the pursuit of their education. While the GI Bill® covers nearly every imaginable school related expense, from tuition, books, fees, and even a living stipend, we understand that utilizing this benefit can be confusing at times.

SDDVA's Veteran Education Team guides veterans, service members, and their families through approved education and training programs that equip our veterans with the skills they need to achieve permanent, fulltime careers with competitive salaries. Our department partners with both private and public employers throughout the state. Together, we understand and value the skills, ethics, and discipline of our veterans, and we work to help them accomplish their goals.

Opportunities include college degrees, certificate programs, on-the-job training programs, apprenticeships, flight training, and correspondence courses.

Veterans can choose to use their GI Bill® from 35 institutes of higher learning (colleges and universities), 25 non-college degree institutions (high schools, welding schools, and trade schools), and two flight training schools.

We encourage veterans wishing to grow their educational footprint to reach out and visit with our team. Reach out to Shane Olivier for education questions (shane.olivier@state.sd.us) and Ryan Fowler (ryan.fowler@state.sd.us) for OJT and apprenticeships. They recognize the specific needs and challenges veterans face in transitioning.

America's veterans are the pride of our nation. They have fought our wars, defended our shores, and kept us free. Providing quality and effective service to veterans and their dependents is, and always will be, our number one mission.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs