



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 July Column – VA Transforms Education Benefits for Veterans

It's hard to believe that summer is half over and in a few short weeks, students will be heading back to school.

There are a wide range of education benefits available to veterans, servicemembers, and their dependents. These programs include apprenticeship, on-the-job training, college degree and certificate programs, flight training, and correspondence courses.

Each program provides different benefits to different groups of individuals and offers a specified number of "months" of benefits. It's worth noting that veterans can only use one VA education benefit for training at a time.

The VA's modernization of the GI Bill affords many new opportunities for veterans and their families.

There is a new feature that allows the transfer of GI Bill education benefits to veterans' dependents and family members, including stepchildren and wards in their care to receive unused benefits.

For the first time, foster children of servicemembers are eligible for GI Bill benefits transfer.

The Fry Scholarship criteria has changed to include spouses and children of service members — including reservists — who died in non-combat events.

Students will also now be required to "electronically verify" their enrollment status with the VA monthly.

Our team at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is ready to assist veterans and eligible family members with accessing the right education benefits and programs and update them on the new alternatives. Our experts can talk you through your options, help determine your eligibility, and give you the information you need to make the best choices for you and your family.

I encourage all veterans with remaining GI Bill benefits to give Shane Olivier a call (605-773-3648) or email him at: shane.olivier@state.sd.us if they have questions about college degree and certificate programs, flight training, and correspondence courses. Questions regarding apprenticeship and on-the-job training should be directed to Ryan Fowler (605-773-3565) or email him at ryan.fowler@state.sd.us.

For more information on the GI Bill visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/>.

South Dakota is grateful to all veterans for their service and is committed to helping them achieve their educational goals.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs