



2023-2024

MINNESOTA GI BILL MANUAL FOR FINANCIAL AID WORKERS

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Introduction

This manual is written by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) for institutions participating in the Minnesota GI Bill (MN GI Bill or the Program) for Postsecondary Educational Assistance and is subject to all subsequent changes in both federal and Minnesota state laws and regulations governing the Program. This manual is updated on a regular basis. Institutions are required to read all written correspondence from MDVA to keep informed of any changes in policy or guidance. All participating institutions are responsible for designating a campus MN GI Bill primary contact and notifying MDVA about changes to the institutional contact information to include name, job title, email address, and phone number.

Program Objective

The objective of the Minnesota GI Bill is to provide postsecondary financial assistance to eligible Minnesota Veterans, service members, and dependents of deceased or severely disabled Minnesota Veterans.

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Institutional Requirements

Postsecondary Institutions Requirements

- All public postsecondary institutions eligible to participate under [Minnesota Statutes 136A.103 and Agency Rules 4830.0300](#) are required to participate.
- Private postsecondary institutions that are eligible to participate under [Minnesota Statutes 136A.103 and Agency Rules 4830.0300](#) are encouraged to participate.
- Graduate schools licensed or registered with the state of Minnesota serving only graduate students are eligible to participate. Institutions will maintain their eligibility as defined under [Minnesota Statute §136A.101, Subd. 4](#) and maintain institution eligibility requirements as required under [Minnesota Statute §136A.103](#).
- Operate the Minnesota GI Bill program as specified in this manual. This document is available on the MDVA Website at <https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/education/minnesotagibill/>.
- **Notification:** Immediately notify MDVA if the institution fails to meet the requirements of [Minnesota Statute §136A.103](#) or if it decides to close its operation as an eligible institution, or fails to satisfy the credit requirements to its students who are receiving MN GI Bill benefits. Any amount of the GI Bill disbursed to the institution from MDVA which were not disbursed to eligible students must be returned to MDVA per the Excess Funds section (page 25) and Appendix B).
- **Liability:** Each party will be responsible for its own acts and behavior and the results thereof.
- **Data Practices:** The institution must comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statute Ch. 13, as it applies to all data provided by the State under this agreement. The civil remedies of [Minnesota Statute §13.08](#) apply to the release of the data referred to in this clause by either the institution or the State. If the institution receives a request to release the data referred to in this Clause, the institution must immediately notify MDVA. MDVA will give the institution instructions concerning the release of the data to the requesting party before the data is released. See page 18, *State Reports and Data Collection*, for further details.
- **Audit:** Under [Minnesota Statute §16C.05, Subd. 5](#), the institution's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices relevant to the operation of the MN GI Bill are subject to examination by MDVA and/or the State Auditor, or Legislative Auditor, as appropriate, for a total of six years. See page 17, *State Audit Requirements*, for further details.
- **Termination:** Each public postsecondary educational institution in the state must participate in the program and each private postsecondary educational institution in the state is encouraged to participate in the program. Any participating private institution may suspend or terminate its participation in the program at the end of any semester or other academic term.
- **Annual Participation Agreement:** Institutions must sign the Participation Agreement each academic year. Participation Agreements will be sent in July to institutions primary contact via DocuSign. Instructions on the process will be included in the email.

Student Eligibility

Military Service Requirements

Through the Veterans Application Tracking System (VATS) process, MDVA will verify that the applicant is an eligible Veteran, non-Veteran, dependent child, or spouse. MDVA staff will inform the applicant directly on their military or dependent eligibility.

Eligibility criteria is provided below for financial aid staff information purposes only. ([Minnesota Statute §197.791 Subd. 4.](#))

- **Eligible Veteran**

- The person is a veteran who is serving or has served honorably in any branch or unit of the United States armed forces at any time
- For purposes of this program, a veteran is defined by [Minnesota Statute §197.447](#)
 - Veteran includes a service member who has received an honorable discharge after leaving any period of federal active-duty service
- Service member who received a service-related medical discharge
- A service member who has fulfilled the requirements for Veteran status but is still serving actively in the United States armed forces is a veteran for the purposes of this program

- **Eligible Non-Veteran**

- A Non-Veteran who has served honorably for a total of five years or more cumulatively as a member of the Minnesota National Guard or any other active or reserve component of the United States armed forces, and any part of that service occurred on or after September 11, 2001;
 - If the student reaches a total five years of cumulative military service while enrolled, he or she is considered an Eligible Non-Veteran in his or her next term of enrollment.

- **Eligible Dependent Child or Spouse**

- The student is the surviving spouse or child of a person who has served in the military at any time and who has died as a direct result of that military service; or
- The student is the spouse or child of a person who has served in the military at any time and who has a total and permanent service-connected disability as rated by the United States Veterans Administration.
 - “Child” means a natural or adopted child of the veteran as defined in [Minnesota Statute §197.75 Subd. 1, Part d.](#)
- Dependents and spouses must be eligible to receive federal dependent education benefits under the VA Chapter 35 or Fry Scholarship.

Supporting Documentation

Applicants are required to certify if they intend to use federal education benefits. MDVA staff will collect and confirm military eligibility, federal education benefit eligibility, insert case notes, and send email correspondence. Email correspondence is visible on the profile page in the financial aid VATS portal.

Additional Requirements

All students must: (Minnesota Statute §197.791, Subd. 4)

- Be a Minnesota Resident as defined in [Minnesota Statute §136A.101, Subd. 8](#).
- Be an undergraduate or graduate student at a participating institution.
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by the institution for students participating in federal Title IV programs.
- Apply each fiscal year and must have applied prior to the end of the academic term for which the assistance is requested. If the application is completed later within the award/fiscal year, the student can receive benefits retroactively back to the term in which they applied.
 - If a traditional term (e.g., semester) is subdivided into non-standard terms (NST), a Veteran is still eligible to apply any time during that semester, even if a non-standard term they were enrolled in has concluded.
- Have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the award year in which they are requesting assistance.
 - Eligibility for the Minnesota G.I. Bill is only contingent on the student's application for FAFSA, and not on the subsequent eligibility for financial aid. That is, a student who has applied for FAFSA and was not found to be eligible for financial aid will still be eligible for the Minnesota G.I. Bill.
- Be enrolled in an education program leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree at a participating institution.
- Be in compliance with child support payment requirements under [section §136A.121, Subd. 2, clause \(5\)](#). Institutions can view the applicant's hold status on the State Grant Web Access Screen to check for child support compliance.
- Student may not receive more than the term or annual maximum award amount. MDVA and each institution share a responsibility for ensuring students are not awarded an amount beyond the term, annual, or lifetime maximum award amounts. Annual and lifetime amounts are visible on the student profile page in the VATS financial aid portal.
- Not be eligible for benefits under [Minnesota Statutes §135A.52](#) which means a person who has reached the age of 62 before the beginning of any term, semester, or quarter in which the student would otherwise be eligible for an award.

Student Application Process

- Applications for the Program are submitted through the online VATS application portal at www.gibill.mn.gov. Applicants must apply before the end of the term as defined by the institution.
 - The application does not have to be complete, but it must be submitted before the end of the term. VATS will record the actual date and time of the application.
 - The institution may retroactively award MN GI Bill funds back to the academic term in which the student first applied if the application is completed within the award/fiscal year.
- Complete applications must include the following:
 - Student accepts the Program terms
 - Student demographic information
 - Military service or dependent information
 - Eligibility documentation confirming student is eligible based on military service; and
 - An applicant certification that they have completed FAFSA; and
 - Documentation of Minnesota residency
 - Meets child support eligibility. Not more than 30 days in arrears in court-ordered child support pursuant to Minnesota State Statute 136A.121. Contact MDVA staff for clarification.
- Transcripts required for State Grant Eligibility
 - If a student is unwilling or unable to provide transcripts in order to complete the application for the State Grant Program, the MN GI Bill application is incomplete unless the institution has determined that the student would not qualify for a state grant.
- Incomplete applications
 - Students with applications pending military service documentation will be handled by MDVA. Financial aid staff will see “Requested” status in the financial aid VATS portal.
 - Financial aid staff are responsible for notifying students through the VATS Financial Aid portal for pending items related to state financial aid eligibility which includes, but is not limited to, documentation of Minnesota Resident Student status, FAFSA submission, and other documentation related to eligibility for state financial aid. Case notes are generated, and email communication is inserted on the student profile page.
 - When a complete application is received, the institution must notify the student through the VATS financial aid portal of their eligibility or ineligibility. Case notes are auto generated, and email correspondence is inserted in the student profile page.

Veterans Application Tracking System (VATS)

Overview

MDVA developed the Veterans Application Tracking System (VATS) to track and process applications for the MN GI Bill program. The objective is to document fiscal year and lifetime caps for eligible applicants in Minnesota. VATS is a streamlined, sustainable, paperless system allowing applicants the ability to follow the process of their claim, receive email notifications, and, if applicable, receive awards.

Applicant and MDVA Process

Applicants are required to:

- Create an account
- Apply online and upload supporting documents through the VATS applicant portal at www.gibill.mn.gov
- Certify federal education usage

MDVA staff are assigned cases based on the last two digits of the applicant Social Security number. Financial Aid staff can see which MDVA staff member is assigned to the case in the VATS financial aid Portal on the applicant profile page. Financial aid staff can also utilize their resident campus MDVA point of contact to assist as necessary. To locate MDVA Regional Coordinators, go to https://linkvet.org/app/custom/1198_regional_coordinators.

MDVA staff will collect supporting documentation in order to verify age, military or dependent status, and federal educational benefit information.

VATS case notes are generated and inserted in the applicant profile page along with a record of email correspondence.

Application Status Definitions

Financial aid staff can see the status of their applicants in the financial aid portal. Cancelled applications are not visible to financial aid staff.

NEW	Applicant applied but the person record has not been verified by MDVA.
INCOMPLETE	MDVA staff have determined the application is incomplete. The application is closed, and the student will have to reapply.
REQUESTED	Applicant applied; person record is verified by MDVA but supporting documentation is missing. A case note is inserted in the profile page and an email has been generated requesting the required documentation and the process to upload the documentation.
NEW DOCUMENTS UPLOADED	The applicant has uploaded supporting documentation. MDVA staff will verify the documentation and either approve, deny or request additional documents.
APPROVED	Applicant applied; person record is verified by MDVA, supporting documents are received, and application is approved for financial aid review. Calculator is now visible for financial aid workers.

Provisioning Financial Aid Staff

Primary Contact

Institutions must identify the primary financial aid person on the annual participation agreement. This form can be found at <https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/education/minnesotagibill/>. Each institution can have one primary contact. If the primary contact works at more than one institution, MDVA requires an email account for each institution. MDVA will use the participation agreement to provision primary financial aid staff in the VATS portal. The institution is responsible for notifying MDVA via email (see contacts on page 4) as soon as possible if the primary contact leaves or is no longer identified as the primary contact.

PRIMARY CONTACTS HAVE ACCESS TO:	FINANCIAL AID STAFF HAVE ACCESS TO:
• Adding additional staff • Remove staff • Entering annual cost of attendance • Institution fund allocation page • Student disbursement page • Student profile page • Calculations page and completing calculations • Entering case notes	• Student profile page • Calculations page and completing calculations • Entering case notes

Financial Aid Staff

Initial Allocation

Initial allocation amounts may be based on an estimated number of veterans attending the institution, the number of eligible students, or prior year disbursements.

Institutions are required to complete an annual Participation Agreement which can be found at <https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/education/minnesotagibill/> to request participation and estimate the amount of MN GI Bill disbursements for the year.

Institutions will be notified of the expected initial allocation prior to the distribution of funds.

Participating institutions may receive the estimated annual allocation as early as July or August each year. Primary VATS Users will see the allocation amounts in the VATS administrative dashboard.

Requesting Additional Funds

Institutions may request additional funds via email to MDVA staff at any time. See page four for MDVA contact information. Additional funding documentation is sent via DocuSign from MDVA staff. Reallocation amounts are recorded in the Primary VATS user administrative dashboard.

Awards

Institutions are required to use the VATS financial aid portal to calculate an award amount for each term an eligible student is enrolled.

Each eligible student shall be awarded an amount based on the following calculation defined in [Minnesota Statutes §197.791 Subd.5](#).

Guidelines

The VATS program displays the applicant's lifetime and fiscal year remaining balance and payment information on the student profile page. MDVA will verify lifetime and fiscal year eligibility prior to approving the application. Financial aid staff should review the applicant payment history and remaining fiscal year and lifetime balances.

The **remaining need** is the **term award amount** based on the following guidelines:

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS		
Full-time	Enrollment level of 12 credits or more for a semester or term	Maximum term award amount: \$5,000
GRADUATE STUDENTS		
Full-time	A graduate student considered to be enrolled full-time by the institution regardless of the number of credits	Maximum term award amount: \$5,000

Annual Maximum Award: No student may receive more than \$5,000 per award/fiscal year.

Lifetime Maximum Award: No student may receive more than \$15,000 during their lifetime (includes MN GI Bill funds for apprenticeship and on-the-job training, license and certification, or other educational or professional benefits). All payments made under the MN GI Bill program are listed on the student profile page.

Calculation

MN GI Bill Cost of Attendance (MN GI Bill COA) varies based on the student's program and enrollment level.

- **Undergraduate Students:** 1.2 times (or 120%) the Recognized State Grant Cost of Attendance for the institution using the program level and enrollment level of the student. [Minnesota Statute §136A.121, Subd. 6.](#)
 - Using State Grant budget for degree program in which student is enrolled (four-year, or less than four-year program).
 - Prorated using the actual number of credits (see "Student Enrollment Status" section) for which the student is enrolled (1-15).
- **Graduate Students:** 1.2 times (or 120%) the maximum Recognized State Grant Cost of Attendance for a four-year program
 - Using maximum budget for a student enrolled in a four-year program
 - Enter the actual number of credits for which the student is enrolled
 - Institutions must select either Graduate full-time or Graduate part time in the Program Level section in the VATS financial aid calculator
 - Note: Full-time and part-time enrollment levels for graduate students are defined by the institution

To determine a student's **remaining need** for each term, the VATS calculator will subtract the amount the student will receive from the *MN GI Bill COA*. It is important that financial aid staff enter exact amounts from the Federal Pell Grant and Minnesota State Grant Program.

MDVA will collect, verify and enter the following information:

- Montgomery GI Bill® (Chapter 30)
- Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Chapter 33) including:
 - Funds received by institution for tuition and fees and
 - Monthly Housing Allowance received by the student and
 - Books and supplies stipend
- Montgomery GI Bill® - Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606)
- Survivors and Dependents Assistance (Chapter 35)
- GI Bill® Kicker
- Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) program
- Army Continuing Education benefits
- Army Health Professions Scholarship Program
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapter 31) benefits including funds received by institution and any stipend received by student as part of the education benefit
- Any other federal education benefits associated with the person's status as a veteran, spouse or child of a veteran

Funds received by the student or the institution **excluded** from the calculation include:

- Veteran’s disability payments from the United States Veterans Administration
- State veteran or military benefits, including State Tuition Reimbursement
- Income earned from the federal Veterans Affairs Student Work-Study Allowance Program (VASWSAP).
- Federal Financial Aid Loans
- Private or institutional scholarships
- Private payments made on the student’s behalf
- Employer payments made on the student’s behalf

Note: GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

Student Enrollment Status

In general, the number of credits to be included in the term award calculation shall be determined using the same method used to determine the enrollment status for the State Grant program (see “Enrollment Status at Eligible Institution” section of the State Grant chapter of the State Financial Aid Manual). Transfer credits earned during a previous term at another institution, or courses that the student audited, or credits awarded from placement or CLEP tests may not be counted towards enrollment status.

Institutions where programs are measured in clock hours must convert to semester hours to determine rate of pursuit.

Federal Military and Veteran Education Benefits

MDVA is collecting, verifying, and entering federal education benefits in the MDVA VATS portal. This information persists to the financial aid portal in the calculator module.

Students who are enrolled in modular programs or courses that do not span the entire length of a semester or term are counted as full-term students.

Note: MDVA is attempting to collect the applicant’s federal education benefit information prior to approving the application. There may be students who miss or understate the funds they are eligible to receive from federal education benefits. In the event you discover the applicant is receiving federal education benefits, update the calculator as appropriate. Contact MDVA with questions on this process (see page 4). It is recommended that financial aid staff verify information with the school certifying official (SCO).

Also, please be aware that the case may arise wherein the applicant is not receiving any federal VA education benefits. If neither MDVA nor the Financial Aid Worker identify any federal VA education benefits, please leave the “Estimated Federal GI Bill Term Deduction” portion of the VATS Calculator page blank.

Documentation of Military and Veteran Education Benefits

Applicants are required to certify their intent to use federal education benefits on their application in the applicant portal at www.gibill.mn.gov. MDVA will collect, verify, and enter the information in the MDVA portal. This information will persist to the financial aid calculator.

Summer or “Crossover” Terms

Students may be eligible to receive funding in a term that overlaps fiscal/financial aid award years (begins before and ends after July 1). Such terms are referenced to as “crossover” terms. If a term does not overlap two award/fiscal years, the award must be calculated using the award calculation and disbursed using funds from the award/fiscal year in which it occurs.

If a student is eligible for MN GI Bill award for a crossover term, the award must be calculated using the VATS calculation page and disbursed using funds from the current application year.

The current State Grant Cost of Attendance, need analysis, laws, rules and policies in place for the award/fiscal year must be used in the MN GI Bill award calculation.

Recalculation

If student receives or is expected to receive additional Federal Veterans Benefits not anticipated in the original calculation, the institution must recalculate the current award as well as any subsequent awards in the VATS calculation portal.

- Annual Federal monthly VA education benefit rates, including the MHA for Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Chapter 33), may change at different times throughout the year. These changes are not based on individual student eligibility but based on factors that are being annually applied across all students eligible for the federal education benefit.
 - o If a term award is calculated or recalculated prior to change in the monthly benefit amounts (typically in October), the institution is not required to recalculate the award.
 - o If a term award is calculated or recalculated after the change in the monthly benefit amounts, the institution must calculate the award based on the updated benefit amounts. MDVA Staff will update the annual amounts in October.
Institutions are not required to adjust or recalculate the award for a student if the monthly housing allowance rate used to determine the amount of federal veteran education benefits changes during a semester or term.
 - o Institutions must use the new rate in the Award Calculation for all subsequent terms.

Institutions are not required to adjust or recalculate the award of a student who drops or adds courses after the institutions drop/add period unless:

The student receives veteran’s benefits not included in the original award calculation; or

- The student changes credit load before disbursement.
- If the student changes credit load after disbursement, no recalculation is necessary.
- If the student withdraws **after** disbursement, no recalculation is necessary.

Institutions **may**, adjust or recalculate the award of a student who adds courses after the add/drop period if the student will be eligible for an increased benefit amount due to the change in enrollment.

Institutions **must** recalculate if EFC or other financial aid eligibility changes affect the student’s eligibility for Pell or State Grant occur during a term and for all subsequent terms.

Disbursement Process

- Funds must be disbursed for the academic year from which funds are generated and application submitted.
- Applicants must be in an MDVA approved status before any calculation can be completed.
- Applicants must meet eligibility criteria described in the Student Eligibility section
- Calculations must be completed in VATS.
- Corresponding case notes and email notifications must be entered in the student profile page.

Applicants are bound by fiscal year limits and can potentially use the MN GI Bill in higher education, on-the-job training, and license and certification during the same fiscal or academic year. MDVA imposes a business rule that financial aid staff disperse funds in VATS as soon as judiciously possible. This process will put a “hold” on the amount determined from the calculation and alleviate the possibility of a fiscal year overpayment. Actual disbursement to the student account can occur at any time, but they must match the dispersed amount recorded in VATS.

The Institution is liable for all funds that are disbursed to a registered student prior to the start of the enrollment period if that student fails to begin the enrollment period.

- The institution must reimburse program funds disbursed to the student prior to the start of the enrollment period if the institution cannot document the student began attending classes. Case notes and email documents must be in the student profile page in VATS.

All other related disbursement guidelines used for the State Grant program apply to the Minnesota GI Bill including determination of disbursement date, acceptable methods of disbursement, student authorization for EFT transactions, student account balance requirements and other applicable guidelines described in the ‘Disbursement Process’ section of the Office of Higher Education State Grant chapter in the Financial Aid Manual.

Refund Process

If a recalculation results in an overpayment to the student, VATS must be used to determine the refund amount. Documentation including case notes and email notifications must be entered in the student profile page in VATS.

Procedures for Denial/Termination

Institution **must** notify the student through the VATS portal of their ineligibility or termination within 30 days of the receipt of a complete application or within 30 days of determining the student must be terminated.

If a complete application is received prior to the beginning of the award/fiscal year, the institution must notify the student of their ineligibility through the VATS portal within 30 days of the beginning of the term or semester.

Appeal

If an applicant has been denied, they will receive appeal instructions in the denial email.

An applicant may appeal a denial in writing to the Commissioner at any time. The Commissioner must rule on any application or appeal within 30 days of receipt of all required documentation.

An applicant whose initial appeal has been rejected may submit an additional appeal in writing at any time that the applicant is able to provide substantively significant additional information regarding eligibility for the program.

The decision of the Commissioner regarding an appeal is final.

An approval of an applicant's eligibility following an appeal by the applicant is not retroactively effective for more than one year or the semester or term of the student's original application, whichever is later.

Management of Funds

Accountability for Funds

Each participating institution is accountable for all MN GI Bill funds disbursed to students. Primary VATS users can track allocations, dispersed funds, and remaining balance in the VATS administrative dashboard.

Funds may be used only during the fiscal year of allocation.

The institution must implement procedures and controls to ensure proper accountability.

The institution must ensure disbursement records submitted in VATS accurately represent disbursements made to eligible students during the award/fiscal year.

When Minnesota GI Bill funds are received from MDVA, the institution may either deposit the funds in a separate account or combine the funds with other institutional funds.

- A separate account is preferable
- If combined with other institutional funds, a fund source number must be traceable to all activity within the account

Each institution must institute control procedures such as the establishment of new account numbers at the beginning of a new fiscal year to ensure that funds from one fiscal year are not carried over to the next fiscal year and that a deficit is not covered by funds from a following fiscal year.

Excess Funds

Excess funds are those funds that will not be disbursed to eligible students at the end of the fiscal year.

The business office **must** keep the financial aid office regularly informed (monthly or bi-monthly reports are recommended) of the balance in the account so the financial aid office can determine whether MN GI Bill spending is expected to exceed or fall short of the amount of funds allocated to the institution.

The financial aid office **must** ensure all disbursements submitted through the VATS calculation page accurately represent disbursements made to eligible students during the award/fiscal year.

MDVA will periodically request information regarding the use of funds during the award/fiscal year.

Excess funds should be returned to MDVA within 30 days of any refund request or by the refund date indicated in the request from MDVA.

Returned funds may be used by MDVA to reallocate funds to other eligible institutions. Institutions **must** return all excess funds at the end of the award/fiscal year to MDVA no later than August 31 to allow institutions the opportunity to award eligible students for a summer crossover term.

Reconciliation

At the end of each fiscal year, the financial aid office **must** reconcile MN GI Bill disbursements by,

- Reviewing MDVA's record of MN GI Bill disbursements in the VATS Financial Aid allocation module, and
- The institution's business office records of MN GI Bill disbursements

MDVA strongly encourages financial aid offices to reconcile their MN GI Bill disbursements with MDVA and the institution's business office monthly and at the end of each term.

State Reports and Data Collection

Participating institutions must correctly complete and submit the following forms and reports by the applicable deadline dates, if requested:

- Institutional Request for Participation (typically July of each year), and
- Additional funds request (as soon as funds are depleted), and
- Refund request and End of Year Report (typically by August 15)

Each institution must ensure accurate disbursement amounts are annotated in VATS.

Upon request, the institution must provide documentation of the amount of federal military or veterans benefits received by eligible students and used in calculating the benefit amount described in the 'Award Calculation' section of this chapter.

Documentation in the form of case notes and system generated emails must be included in the student profile section of VATS.

An institution's allocation for the next aid year shall be withheld if proper case notes, award documentation, and email correspondence is not complete for students who receive awards or are denied the benefit.

State Audit Requirements

Records Available for Auditors

MDVA auditors will periodically visit each participating institution to perform an audit.

Each participating institution must establish a procedure by which an audit can be conducted by going to no more than three administrative offices within the institution. In most cases, these will be the Financial Aid Office, the Business Office, and the Registrar's Office, but that choice is made by the institution.

Each institution must maintain and make available to auditors the individual student financial aid files for Minnesota GI Bill recipients.

Historical records and documentation must be kept on file for six years after the last day of the fiscal year or until all audit exceptions for the period are resolved.

Documentation of Student Eligibility

The institution must have written documentation to support the student's eligibility including, but not limited to, the following:

- The student's enrollment level in an eligible program at the time of the award disbursement. The actual documentation, such as a fee statement or transcript, need not be kept at the audit location but must be readily available at the Registrar's Office or other responsible department within the institution; and
- The student met the other program eligibility requirements described in the 'Eligibility to Participate' section of this manual

Documentation of Refunds

Documentation in the form of case notes supporting individual student refunds to the MN GI Bill must be entered in the VATS under the student profile page.

Appendices

Appendix A: Minnesota Statutes Governing Minnesota GI Bill

§197.791 MINNESOTA GI BILL PROGRAM

Subdivision 1. Definitions

(a) The definitions in this subdivision apply to this section.

(b) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of veteran's affairs, unless otherwise specified.

(c) "Cost of attendance" for undergraduate students has the meaning given in section 136A.121, subdivision 6, multiplied by a factor of 1.2. Cost of attendance for graduate students has the meaning given in section 136A.121, subdivision 6, multiplied by a factor of 1.2, using the tuition and fee maximum established by law for four-year programs. For purposes of calculating the cost of attendance for graduate students, full time is eight credits or more per term or the equivalent.

(d) "Child" means a natural or adopted child of a person described in subdivision 4, paragraph (a), clause (1), item (i) or (ii).

(e) "Eligible institution" means a postsecondary institution under section 136A.101, subdivision 4, or a graduate school licensed or registered with the state of Minnesota serving only graduate students.

(f) "Program" means the Minnesota GI Bill program established in this section, unless otherwise specified.

(g) "Time of hostilities" means any action by the armed forces of the United States that is recognized by the issuance of a presidential proclamation or a presidential executive order in which the armed forces expeditionary medal or other campaign service medals are awarded according to presidential executive order, and any additional period or place that the commissioner determines and designates, after consultation with the United States Department of Defense, to be a period or place where the United States is in a conflict that places persons at such a risk that service in a foreign country during that period or in that place should be considered to be included.

(h) "Veteran" has the meaning given in section 197.447. Veteran also includes a service member who has received an honorable discharge after leaving each period of federal active duty service and has:

(1) served 90 days or more of federal active duty in a foreign country during a time of hostilities in that country; or

(2) been awarded any of the following medals:

- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal;
- Kosovo Campaign Medal;
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal;
- Iraq Campaign Medal;
- Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; or
- any other campaign medal authorized for service after September 11, 2001; or

(3) received a service-related medical discharge from any period of service in a foreign country during a time of hostilities in that country.

A service member who has fulfilled the requirements for being a veteran under this paragraph but is still serving actively in the United States armed forces is also a veteran for the purposes of this section.

Subd. 2. Program established. The Minnesota GI Bill program is established to provide postsecondary educational assistance, apprenticeship and on-the-job training benefits, and other professional and educational benefits to eligible Minnesota veterans and to the children and spouses of deceased and severely disabled Minnesota veterans.

The commissioner, in cooperation with eligible postsecondary educational institutions, shall administer the program for the purpose of providing postsecondary educational assistance to eligible persons in accordance with this section. Each public postsecondary educational institution in the state must participate in the program and each private postsecondary educational institution in the state is encouraged to participate in the program. Any participating private institution may suspend or terminate its participation in the program at the end of any semester or other academic term.

Subd. 3. Duties; responsibilities.

(a) The commissioner shall establish policies and procedures including, but not limited to, procedures for student application record keeping, information sharing, payment of educational assistance benefits under subdivision 5, payment of apprenticeship or on-the-job training benefits under subdivision 5a, payment of other educational or professional benefits under subdivision 5b, and other procedures the commissioner considers appropriate and necessary for effective and efficient administration of the program established in this section.

(b) The commissioner may delegate part, or all the administrative procedures for the program to responsible representatives of participating eligible institutions. The commissioner may execute an interagency agreement with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education for services the commissioner determines necessary to administer the program.

Subd. 4. Eligibility.

(a) A person is eligible for educational assistance under subdivision 5 if:

(1) the person is:

- a veteran who is serving or has served honorably in any branch or unit of the United States armed forces at anytime;
- a nonveteran who has served honorably for a total of five years or more cumulatively as a member of the Minnesota National Guard or any other active or reserve component of the United States armed forces, and any part of that service occurred on or after September 11, 2001;
- the surviving spouse or child of a person who has served in the military and who has died as a direct result of that military service, only if the surviving spouse or child is eligible to receive federal education benefits under United States Code, title 38, chapter 33, as amended, or United States Code, title 38, chapter 35, as amended; or
- the spouse or child of a person who has served in the military at any time and who has a total and permanent service- connected disability as rated by the United States Veterans Administration, only if the spouse or child is eligible to receive federal education benefits under United States Code, title 38, chapter 33, as amended, or United States Code, title 38, chapter 35, as amended; and

(2) the person receiving the educational assistance is a Minnesota resident, as defined in section 136A.101, subdivision 8; and

(3) the person receiving the educational assistance:

- is an undergraduate or graduate student at an eligible institution;
- is maintaining satisfactory academic progress as defined by the institution for students participating in federal Title IV programs;
- is enrolled in an education program leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree at an eligible institution;
- has applied for educational assistance under this section prior to the end of the academic term for which the assistance is being requested;
- is in compliance with child support payment requirements under section 136A.121, subdivision 2, clause (5); and
- has completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

(b) A person's eligibility terminates when the person becomes eligible for benefits under section 135A.52.

(c) To determine eligibility, the commissioner may require official documentation, including the person's federal form DD-214 or other official military discharge papers; correspondence from the United States Veterans Administration; birth certificate; marriage certificate; proof of enrollment at an eligible institution; signed affidavits; proof of residency; proof of identity; or any other official documentation the commissioner considers necessary to determine eligibility.

(d) The commissioner may deny eligibility or terminate benefits under this section to any person who has not provided sufficient documentation to determine eligibility for the program. An applicant may appeal the commissioner's eligibility determination or termination of benefits in writing to the commissioner at any time. The commissioner must rule on any application or appeal within 30 days of receipt of all documentation that the commissioner requires. The decision of the commissioner regarding an appeal is final. However, an applicant whose appeal of an eligibility determination has been rejected by the commissioner may submit an additional appeal of that determination in writing to the commissioner at any time that the applicant is able to provide substantively significant additional information regarding the applicant's eligibility for the program. An approval of an applicant's eligibility by the commissioner following an appeal by the applicant is not retroactively effective for more than one year or the semester of the person's original application, whichever is later.

(e) Upon receiving an application with insufficient documentation to determine eligibility, the commissioner must notify the applicant within 30 days of receipt of the application that the application is being suspended pending receipt by the commissioner of sufficient documentation from the applicant to determine eligibility.

Subd. 5. Educational assistance.

(a) On approval by the commissioner of eligibility for the program, the applicant shall be awarded, on a funds-available basis, the educational assistance under the program for use at any time according to program rules at any eligible institution.

(b) The amount of educational assistance in any semester or term for an eligible person must be determined by subtracting from the eligible person's cost of attendance the amount the person received or was eligible to receive in that semester or term from:

(c)

- (1) the federal Pell Grant;
- (2) the state grant program under section 136A.121; and
- (3) any federal military or veterans' educational benefits including but not limited to the Montgomery GI Bill, GI Bill Kicker, the federal tuition assistance program, vocational rehabilitation benefits, and any other federal benefits associated with the person's status as a veteran, except veterans disability payments from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

(d) The amount of educational assistance for any eligible person who is a full-time student must not exceed the following:

- (1) \$5,000 per state fiscal year; and
- (2) \$15,000 in a lifetime.

~~(e) For a part-time student, the amount of educational assistance must not exceed \$500 per semester or term of enrollment. For the purpose of this paragraph, a part-time undergraduate student is a student taking fewer than 12 credits or the equivalent for a semester or term of enrollment and a part-time graduate student is a student considered part-time by the eligible institution the graduate student is attending. The minimum award for undergraduate and graduate students is \$50 per term.~~

Subd. 6. Apprenticeship and on-the-job training.

(a) The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioners of employment and economic development and labor and industry, shall develop and implement an apprenticeship and on-the-job training program to administer a portion of the Minnesota GI Bill program to pay benefit amounts to eligible persons, as provided in this subdivision.

(b) An "eligible employer" means an employer operating a qualifying apprenticeship or on-the-job training program that has been approved by the commissioner.

(c) A person is eligible for apprenticeship and on-the-job training assistance under this subdivision if the person is:

- a veteran who is serving or has served honorably in any branch or unit of the United States armed forces at anytime;
- a nonveteran who has served honorably for a total of five years or more cumulatively as a member of the Minnesota National Guard or any other active or reserve component of the United States armed forces, and any part of that service occurred on or after September 11, 2001;
- the surviving spouse or child of a person who has served in the military and who has died as a direct result of that military service, only if the surviving spouse or child is eligible to receive federal education benefits under United States Code, title 38, chapter 33, as amended, or United States Code, title 38, chapter 35, as amended; or
- the spouse or child of a person who has served in the military at any time and who has a total and permanent service-connected disability as rated by the United States Veterans Administration, only if the spouse or child is eligible to receive federal education benefits under United States Code, title 38, chapter 33, as amended, or United States Code, title 38, chapter 35, as amended.

(d) The amount of assistance paid to or on behalf of an eligible individual under this subdivision must not exceed the following:

- (1) \$3,000 per fiscal year for apprenticeship expenses;
 - (2) \$3,000 per fiscal year for on-the-job training;
 - (3) \$1,000 for a job placement credit payable to an eligible employer upon hiring and completion of six consecutive months' employment of a person receiving assistance under this subdivision; and
 - (4) \$1,000 for a job placement credit payable to an eligible employer after a person receiving assistance under this subdivision has been employed by the eligible employer for at least 12 consecutive months as a full-time employee.
- (e) No more than \$5,000 in aggregate benefits under this subdivision may be paid to or on behalf of an individual in one fiscal year,
- (f) If an eligible person receives benefits under subdivision 5 or 7, the eligible persons aggregate benefits under this subdivision and subdivisions, 6, and 7, must not exceed \$15,000 in the eligible person's lifetime.
- (g) Assistance for apprenticeship expenses and on-the-job training is available for qualifying programs, which must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:
- (1) the training must be with an eligible employer;
 - (2) the training must be documented and reported;
 - (3) the training must reasonably be expected to lead to an entry-level position; and
 - (4) the position must require at least six months of training to become fully trained.

Subd. 7. Additional professional or educational benefits.

- (a) The commissioner shall develop and implement a program to administer a portion of the Minnesota GI Bill program to pay additional benefit amounts to eligible persons as provided under this subdivision.
- (b) A person is eligible for additional benefits under this subdivision if the person is:
 - a veteran who is serving or has served honorably in any branch or unit of the United States armed forces at anytime;
 - a nonveteran who has served honorably for a total of five years or more cumulatively as a member of the Minnesota National Guard or any other active or reserve component of the United States armed forces, and any part of that service occurred on or after September 11, 2001;
 - the surviving spouse or child of a person who has served in the military and who has died as a direct result of that military service, only if the surviving spouse or child is eligible to receive federal education benefits under United States Code, title 38, chapter 33, as amended, or United States Code, title 38, chapter 35, as amended; or
 - the spouse or child of a person who has served in the military at any time and who has a total and permanent service- connected disability as rated by the United States Veterans Administration, only if the spouse or child is eligible to receive federal education benefits under United States Code, title 38, chapter 33, as amended, or United States Code, title 38, chapter 35, as amended.

(c) The amount of assistance paid to or on behalf of an eligible individual under this subdivision must not exceed the following amounts:

(1) \$3,000 per state fiscal year; and

(2) \$15,000 in a lifetime.

(d) If an eligible person receives benefits under subdivision 5 or 6, the eligible persons aggregate benefits under this subdivision and subdivisions, 5, and 6, must not exceed \$15,000 in the eligible person's lifetime

(e) A person eligible under this subdivision may use the benefit amounts for the following purposes:

(1) licensing or certification tests, the successful completion of which demonstrates an individual's possession of the knowledge or skill required to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession, provided that the tests and the licensing or credentialing organizations or entities that offer the tests are approved by the commissioner.

(2) tests for admission to institutions of higher learning or graduate schools;

(3) national tests providing an opportunity for course credit at institutions of higher learning;

(4) a preparatory course for a test that is required or used for admission to an institution of higher education or a graduate program; and

(5) any fee associated with the pursuit of a professional or educational objective specified in clauses (1) to (4).

Subd. 8. Appropriation. The amount necessary to pay the benefit amounts in subdivisions 5, 6 and 7 is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner.

Appendix B: Minnesota GI Bill Refund Form



STATE OF MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



20 West 12th Street • St. Paul, MN 55155 • (651) 201-8227
Fax (651) 282-3762 • MinnesotaVeteran.org • 1-888-LinkVet • mngibill@state.mn.us

2023-2024 Minnesota GI Bill Refund Return Form For Returning End of Year Balances or Post-Closure Refunds

Amount of refund: \$

Person returning funds:

Name of College:

Vendor ID:

Phone #:

Date:

Return refund check and form to:

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
Attn: Fiscal Services
20 West 12th St.
St. Paul, MN 55155