

Chapter 6 – Reserve Component Education/Training

Service members leaving the military sometimes find a gap between the civilian careers they want and the specific education or training needed to achieve it. The following section will help you identify the resources to assist you in getting the training and education needed to help close that gap.

A. Your Education Benefits: Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reserve, REAP, and More

Several programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provide financial assistance to veterans for education programs. To receive benefits, the education program must be VA approved. You may receive benefits for a wide variety of approved training, including undergraduate or graduate degree programs at a college or university. Also included are accredited independent study programs, leading to a standard college degree as well as a cooperative training program. Technical and vocational programs, correspondence courses, flight training courses, on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs, licensing and certification test reimbursement and national tests for admission or credit may also be taken.

The two programs designed for members of the Guard and Reserves are the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) and the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP).

- Eligibility for MGIB-SR requires a commitment to serve a minimum of six years in the Selected Reserve.
- There are provisions that may allow you to use your MGIB-SR benefits after you separate from the National Guard or Reserves. For example: If you were activated at any time, you may remain eligible to use your MGIB-SR benefits for the number of months you were activated, plus four months. So, if you were activated for 3 months, you may be able to use your GI Bill-SR benefits for up to 7 months after you leave the guard or reserves.
- REAP (Reserve Educational Assistance Program) is a new benefit which provides education assistance to members of the reserve components who were called or ordered to active service in response to a war or national emergency, as declared by the President or Congress. Eligibility is determined by the DoD or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and requires that the member serve on active duty 90 consecutive days or more and continue to serve in the Ready Reserve after demobilization/deactivation.

If you originally served in an active duty component before affiliating with the National Guard or Reserves, you may have remaining benefits under either the Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) or the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). Both programs are intended to help you develop skills that will enhance your opportunities for employment. As a rule, the benefits under either of these programs must be used within 10 years of separation from active duty. However, your 10-year limit may be extended if you were activated for more than 90 days during your service in a Reserve Component. Consult with your unit Education Officer, Navy College Representative, or contact the Regional VA Office nearest you and speak with a counselor regarding these benefits.

Tip: Be sure to fill out and submit VA Form 22-1990, "Application for Education Benefits" (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-1990.pdf>) as soon as possible, even if you are not ready to begin school. You will reduce the processing time later by doing this now.

Your eligibility for any of VA administered education programs is determined by many factors including length of service (duty) requirements, original enlistment date, character of service, and whether or not you were activated. Each program's eligibility criteria is listed below:

Post-Vietnam-Era Veterans Education Assistance Program (VEAP) Eligibility

With the exception of some people who signed delayed entry contracts before January 1, 1977, VEAP is for people who first entered active duty during the period January 1, 1977 through June 30, 1985, and who made a contribution to a VEAP account before April 1, 1987. If you participated in VEAP and withdrew your contribution, you may start a new allotment, or make a lump-sum contribution, at any time while you are on active duty.

MGIB-SR Eligibility

You must have received a "Notice of Basic Eligibility" after signing a six-year obligation to serve in the Selected Reserve or National Guard.

MGIB eligibility is straightforward for most veterans, but it can be complex for others. If you have questions about MGIB-SR eligibility, check with your Education Center, or call the VA toll-free education number, 1-888-GI Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551). You may also get information at the VA Education Service website <http://www.gibill.va.gov>.

Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP) – Chapter 1607

To be eligible for REAP, under Chapter 1607, you must have served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001 under Title 10, U. S. Code at least 90 consecutive days under a contingency operation.

- National Guard Service members are also eligible if their active duty is under Section 502(f), Title 32, U. S. Code and they served for 90 consecutive days when authorized by the President or Secretary of Defense for a national emergency and is supported by federal funds.

Disabled Service members who have an illness or disease incurred or aggravated in the line-of-duty are released before completing 90 consecutive days, are also eligible.

MGIB- Active Duty Eligibility

Some members of the Guard and Reserve may have become eligible for the MGIB –Active Duty from prior active duty service. Understanding eligibility requirements for MGIB can be complex. If you have questions about MGIB eligibility, check with your Education Center, or call the VA toll-free education number, 1-888-GI Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551). You may also get information at the VA Education Service web site <http://www.GIBILL.va.gov>.

With the exception of some officers who received a commission, after December 31, 1976, as a result of graduating from a service academy, or after completing a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship program, the MGIB is for people who first came on active duty on July 1, 1985, or later, and who did not decline – in writing – to participate in the MGIB program.

To be eligible for the full 36 months of MGIB benefits, veterans must normally meet the character of service, and minimum length of service requirements. Some veterans who are separated from active duty early for the convenience of the government may also receive the full 36 months of MGIB benefits. Depending on the reason for separation, other veterans who are separated from active duty early may be eligible for prorated – reduced - MGIB benefits; one month of benefits for each full month of active duty.

For More Information

The Department of Veteran Affairs can provide you with educational counseling after you are released from active duty. Contact the VA GI Bill Regional Processing Office by dialing toll-free 1-888-GI Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551) or go to the MGIB website at <http://www.gibill.va.gov>. To contact the VA Regional Office

closest to you, go to <http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> and click on "Type of Facility." Then, click on your State to locate the Regional Office nearest you. In addition, information on MGIB-SR and other veterans' educational benefit programs is available from an installation Education Center (if you live near one) or your Unit Education Officer. You may also check to see if there is a VA Representative or Coordinator located at your local college or university admission or registrar's office. If so, call them and make an appointment to see them for assistance.

Did You Know? You may also qualify for Federal Financial Student Aid such as Pell Grants and the Stafford Loan Program even if you are still on active duty. Visit <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> to learn how to apply.

B. Additional Educational or Training Options

The transition from military to civilian life is an excellent time to take a serious look at your options for future success. Now is the best time to evaluate your educational options.

Guidance Counseling

After you return home, take some time to evaluate your education goals. Contact a military installation Education Center nearest to where you live (by phone or e-mail for those that do not live near a military installation), Navy College Office, or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center. The counselors can provide assistance in determining the goals that are right for you. If you feel you need additional education or training, an Education Counselor can help guide you to the appropriate curriculum and institution, and help you with the paperwork necessary to enroll in an academic or vocational program. You can also contact the VA Regional Office for education assistance. With today's technology, you do not have to live near a military installation to get help. Assistance is just a phone call or e-mail away.

Career Assessment

If you are not sure what you want to do upon leaving the military, then you should talk to a counselor at your VA Regional Office, closest Education Center, Navy College Office, Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center or Transition Office. Counselors at these various locations can recommend aptitude tests or vocational interest inventories to help clarify your career goals. These tests can help you pinpoint job skills in which you might excel and then relate them to specific occupations and careers in the civilian world. You can also contact the closest Department of Labor Career One Stop Center for assistance in getting a skill assessment. It's also a valuable tool that can help you develop your education or training career goals.

Some of the assessment instruments available through an installation's Education Center, Navy College Office, or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center are the Strong Interest Inventory, Self-Directed Search, or Career Assessment Inventory, as well as computerized counseling systems like Discover. These can help you select jobs and careers that more closely match your personality, background, and career goals. Again, don't forget to check with the Career One Stop Center to find out about the various skills assessment instruments they have available.

Academic Planning

Once you have identified your career goal, you may find you need a formal education to achieve it. An Education Counselor can explore the possibilities with you. Counselors can also advise you on non-traditional educational opportunities that can make it easier for you to get a diploma, vocational certificate or college degree. These non-traditional opportunities include the following:

- **Take “challenge exams,” such as a college-level equivalency exam:** You can convert knowledge learned outside the classroom into credits toward a college program. This can save you time and money.
- **Go to school part time while continuing to hold down a full-time job:** This approach might make adult education more practical.
- **See the veterans’ coordinator at the college, university or vocational school of your choice:** The coordinator can help you understand your VA educational benefits and might lead you to special programs offered to former Service members.
- **Determine if your military learning experiences can translate to course credit:** Check with your Unit Education Officer or an active duty military installation Education Center, Navy College Office or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center for assistance. You can do this after your release from active duty. You can also go online and get a copy of your DD Form 2586, “Verification of Military Experience and Training” (VMET) document at <http://www.dmdc.dod.mil/vmet>.
- **Take advantage of distance learning opportunities:** With today’s technological advances, you can enroll in an educational program in which courses are offered by accredited educational institutions in a variety of formats, i.e., CD-ROM, the Internet, satellite TV, cable TV, and video tapes.

Vocational Services

You can also learn about various vocational services available through a military Education Center, Navy College Office or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center, as well through the VA Regional Office. Counselors are available to help you understand the many vocational and technical school programs. The counselors at these centers can also show you how to get course credits for non-traditional learning experience (such as military certifications and on-the-job training).

The counselors may also help you find out about certification and licensing requirements – for example, how to get a journeyman card for a particular trade. The counselors can give you information on vocational and apprenticeship programs.

Note: Local trade unions may also offer vocational training in fields that interest you.

Licensing and Certification

Your military occupational specialty may require a license or certification in the civilian workforce. There are several resources available to assist you in finding civilian requirements for licensing and certification:

- <http://www.acinet.org>: Department of Labor website. Go to “Career Tools” section to look up licenses by state, requirements for the license, and point-of-contact information for the state licensing board.
- http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/danteshome.asp: DANTES website has information on certification programs.
- <https://www.cool.army.mil/>: Find civilian credentials related to your military occupational specialty, learn what it takes to obtain the credentials, and see if there are available programs that will help pay credentialing fees.
- <https://www.cool.navy.mil/>: Find civilian credentials related to your Navy rating, learn what it takes to obtain the credentials, and see if there are available programs that will help pay credentialing fees.

C. Testing Available Through An Education Center

Testing can be an important first step in your career development. Some colleges and universities may require you to provide test results as part of your application. After your release from active duty, you may be able to take advantage of the testing services offered by your military Education Center, Navy College Office or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center. For many Guard and Reserve personnel, these centers may not exist where you live. However, you can still access them by phone or e-mail. Once in contact with them, ask them if there are any websites that can also assist you. The services they provide include the following:

- **Vocational interest inventories:** Most Education Centers, Navy College Offices and Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Centers offer free vocation interest inventories that can help you identify the careers most likely to interest you.
- **Academic entry exams:** Before applying for college or other academic programs, you may want to take a college admission test such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), ACT, or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Some schools may require that you do so. Information on these tests is available through your Unit Education Officer, installation Education Center, Navy College Office, or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center. You must start early. These exams are offered only a few times each year.
- **Credit by examination:** Your unit Education Officer, installation Education Center, Navy College Office and Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center offer a variety of “challenge” exams that can lead to college credit. If you score high enough, you may be exempt from taking a certain class or course requirements – resulting in a big savings of time and money as you earn your degree. The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) are also free to Service members while on active duty. Consider taking advantage of this while on full-time active duty.

Save Time and Money: You can get up to 30 college credits by taking the five CLEP General Exams. If you are currently serving in the Armed Forces, you can take these exams for free.

- **Certification examinations:** As a Service member and member of the National Guard and Reserve working in an important occupational field, you have received extensive training (service schools, correspondence course, OJT, active duty tours) which has proved valuable in developing your professional skills. A military Education Center, Navy College Office, Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Center, or VA counselor can provide you information on certification examinations that “translate” military training into civilian terms. Examinations are available in many skill areas and upon successful completion the documentation you receive is readily understood and received in the professional occupational civilian community.

Contact a military Education Center, Navy College Office, or Marine Corps LifeLong Learning Office, or a VA counselor to ensure that they have the capability to offer examinations you need in paper and pencil or Computer-base-testing (CBT) format.

- **Licensing and Certification:** Your military occupational specialty may require a licensure or certification in the civilian workforce. There are several resources available to assist you in finding out civilian requirements for licensing and certification:
 - <http://www.acinet.org>: Department of Labor website. Go to "Career Tools" section to look up licenses by States, requirements for the license, and point-of-contact information for the State licensing board.
 - http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_web/danteshome.asp: DANTES website has information on certification programs and tests.
 - <https://www.cool.army.mil/>: Find civilian credentials related to your Army military occupational specialty, learn what it takes to obtain the credentials, and see if there are available programs that will help pay credentialing fees. Recommend Air Guard, Air Force Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve check out the website to see if your Service military occupational specialty closely relates to those of the Army.
 - <https://www.cool.navy.mil/>: Find civilian credentials related to your Navy rating, learn what it takes to obtain the credentials, and see if there are available programs that will help pay credential fees.

D. DoD Voluntary Education Program Website

Demobilizing members of the Guard and Reserve are encouraged to review the information at the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Program website, <http://www.voled.doded.mil>. It offers a wide variety of educational information of interest and use. The website was originally established to provide support for military education center staffs worldwide. As the website developed, it took on the mission of providing direct support to active and reserve components' Service members and their families. This support includes information on all programs provided by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support (DANTES) including the Distance Learning Program, Examination Program, Certification Program, Counselor Support Program, Troops to Teachers, and a wide variety of educational catalogs and directories.

Troops to Teachers

More information on the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program can be found in **Chapter 3** of this guide, or by visiting the TTT website at: <http://www.proudtoserveagain.com/>

Links are provided to each of the services' education programs and to a wide variety of education-related resources. There is also a Directory of Education Centers on the website, which contains information on all of the services' education centers worldwide, to include addresses, phone numbers and E-mail addresses.

The primary goal of the website is to provide on-site, or through links, all information for members of the Guard and Reserves to select, plan and complete their program of study, either while on active duty or upon release from active duty.

E. Service Unique Transcripts

Army: For everything you want to know about the free AARTS transcript (Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System), go to <http://aarts.army.mil>. This free transcript includes your military training, your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), and college level examination scores with the college credit recommended for those experiences. It is a valuable asset that you should provide to your college or your employer and it is available for Active Army, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers. You can view and print your own transcript at this website.

Save time and Money: Unless you know for sure that you need to take a particular course, wait until the school gets *all* your transcripts before you sign up for classes. Otherwise you may end up taking courses you don't need.

Navy and Marine Corps: Information on how to obtain the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) is available at <http://www.navycollege.navy.mil>. SMART is now available to document the American Council on Education (ACE) recommended college credit for military training and occupational experience. SMART is an academically accepted record that is validated by ACE. The primary purpose of SMART is to assist Service members in obtaining college credit for their military experience. Additional information on SMART can also be obtained from your nearest Navy College Office or Marine Corps Education Center, or contact the Navy College Center.

Air Force: The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) automatically captures your training, experience and standardized test scores. Transcript information may be viewed at the CCAF website: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/>

Coast Guard: The Coast Guard Institute (CGI) requires each Service member to submit documentation of all training (except correspondence course records), along with an enrollment form, to receive a transcript. Transcript information can be found at the Coast Guard Institute Home Page: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/forms.html>

F. U.S. Department of Education Financial Aid Programs

Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, offers over \$80 billion dollars in financial aid that help millions of students manage the cost of education each year. There are three categories of federal student aid: grants, work-study and loans. Even if you are still on active duty, you can apply for aid such as Pell Grants or Federal Stafford Loans. Find out more by visiting <http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov/>.

How do I get this aid?

By completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You can apply online or on paper, but filing online is faster and easier. Get further instructions on the application process at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. You should also apply for a Federal Student Aid PIN (if you haven't done so already). The PIN allows you to sign your application electronically, which speeds up the application process even more. Apply for a PIN at <http://www.pin.ed.gov/>.

Whose information do I include on my FAFSA?

There is a series of eight questions on the application that ask about your dependency status. If you are a veteran, or are currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training, you are considered an independent student and would only include your information (and that of your spouse, if married). For more detailed information go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>.

What determines my eligibility for federal student aid?

Eligibility for federal student aid is based on financial need and on several other factors. The financial aid administrator at the college or career school you plan to attend will determine your eligibility.

To receive aid from our programs, you must

- demonstrated financial need (except for certain loans—your school can explain which loans are not need based).
- have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, pass a test approved by the U.S. Department of Education, meet other standards your state establishes that the Department approves, or complete a high school education in a home school setting that is treated as such under state law.
- be working toward a degree or certificate in an eligible program.
- be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen.
- have a valid Social Security Number (unless you're from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau).
- register with the Selective Service if required. You can use the paper or electronic FAFSA to register, you can register at <http://www.sss.gov/>, or you can call 1-847-688-6888. (TTY users can call 1-847-688-2567.)
- maintain satisfactory academic progress once in school.
- certify that you are not in default on a federal student loan and do not owe money on a federal student grant.
- certify that you will use federal student aid only for educational purposes.

Can I use my Montgomery GI Bill and still get Federal Student Aid at the same time?

Yes. When you complete your FAFSA, you will be asked what you will be receiving in veterans educational benefits, which the Montgomery GI Bill falls under. Your school will take into consideration the amount you list on the application, along with any other financial assistance you are eligible to receive, in preparing your financial aid package.

Can you tell me a little about the Veterans Upward Bound Program?

The Veterans Upward Bound Program is a free U.S. Department of Education program designed to help eligible U.S. military veterans refresh their academic skills so that they can successfully complete the post-secondary school of their choosing.

The VUB program services include:

- Basic skills development, which is designed to help veterans successfully complete a high school equivalency program and gain admission to college education programs.
- Short-term remedial or refresher classes for high school graduates that have put off pursuing a college education.
- Assistance with applications to the college or university of choice.
- Assistance with applying for financial aid.
- Personalized Counseling.
- Academic advice and assistance.
- Career Counseling.
- Assistance in getting veterans services from other available resources.
- Exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and other educational activities not usually available to disadvantaged people.

The VUB program can help you improve your skills in:

- Mathematics
- Foreign Language
- Composition
- Laboratory Science
- Reading
- Literature
- Computer Basics
- Any other subjects you may need for success in education beyond high school.
- And Tutorial & Study Skills Assistance.

To be eligible for VUB you must:

- Be a U.S. Military veteran with 181 or more days active duty service and discharged on/after January 31, 1955, under conditions other than dishonorable; **and**
- Meet the criteria for Low-income according to guidelines published annually by the U.S. Department of Education, AND/OR a first-generation potential college graduate; **and**
- Demonstrate academic need for Veterans Upward Bound according; **and**
- Meet other local eligibility criteria as noted in the local VUB project's Approved Grant Proposal, such as county of residence, etc.

For more information, as well as a link to individual program locations, visit <http://www.veteransupwardbound.org/vetub.html>.

What if I have children who will be getting ready for college soon? Will they qualify for aid?

Federal Student Aid has a new tool called *FAFSA4caster*, designed to help students and their families plan for college. The *FAFSA4caster* provides students with an early estimate of their eligibility for federal student financial assistance. Military dependents who are enrolled in college and are eligible to receive Pell Grants should check out our two newest programs: Academic Competitiveness Grants and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grants (National SMART Grants). Visit our website at <http://www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov> for more information.