FAMILY EDUCATION BENEFITS

DEA / Chapter 35 explained

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance in plain English.

A benefit for qualifying spouses and children
DEA is an education and training program. A Veteran's service-connected permanent and total (P&T) disability, a service-connected death, and certain service-member circumstances can establish a qualifying basis. The beneficiary must also meet the applicable requirements. [4]

What the program supports

Approved education or training can include degree and certificate programs, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. For school or training that started on or after August 1, 2018, assistance is generally available for up to 36 months. Earlier starts may involve up to 45 months. These months of entitlement are distinct from the calendar period in which benefits may be used. [4]

How payments are described

VA pays DEA benefits directly to the beneficiary. Payment levels depend on the type of training and enrollment level. A partial month may be prorated. For some less-than-half-time enrollment, tuition and fees can limit the payment. VA publishes rates for each rate period. [2]

Concept	What it describes
Eligibility period	The calendar window during which an eligible beneficiary can use the program. [1]
Entitlement months	The amount of education or training assistance available under the program. [4]
Enrollment verification	The beneficiary's confirmation of continued enrollment. VA explains this separately from the school's reporting of enrollment. [3]

Education programs have distinct eligibility and payment structures. DEA, the Fry Scholarship, transferred GI Bill benefits, and state tuition programs have separate governing rules. [1, 4]

DATES AND PROGRAM ROLES

Why dates matter

August 1, 2023 is an important dividing date in VA's published DEA time-limit rules.

Children

VA describes no time limit when eligibility began, age 18 was reached, or high school or a GED was completed on or after August 1, 2023. When all three occurred earlier, the general rule is an eight-year period before age 26, with exceptions. [1]

Spouses

When the qualifying event occurred on or after August 1, 2023, VA describes no time limit. Earlier events generally involve a ten-year period, with longer periods in certain circumstances. [1]

Schools and enrollment

The school's certifying official reports enrollment information for an approved program. Beneficiary enrollment verification is a separate confirmation of attendance required for DEA payments. VA's enrollment publication explains the verification process and which education benefits require it. [3, 4]

DEA and survivor payments

VA distinguishes spouses from children. A spouse can receive DEA and DIC concurrently. A child receiving DIC gives up that payment when beginning DEA. [1]

Official references

[1] **VA Chapter 35 / DEA program overview**

[2] **VA DEA payment rules and current rates**

[3] **VA enrollment verification overview**

[4] **U.S. Army DEA benefit fact sheet**

Reference titles are linked to the official publications. Source review date is shown in the footer.

These are selected program rules. Detailed exceptions and an individual's benefit history can affect the result. Dollar amounts are available in the linked rate publication.