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GI Bill Benefits 101: Did You Know Dependents Can Use Benefits?

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If you've served in the military, you may have GI benefits available to you. If you are wondering when a dependent can use your GI bill benefits, you can now find the answer. There are specific times when your benefits are passed on or can be used by one or more of your dependents.



Educational benefits are available to surviving dependents of certain veterans or military service members. If someone has GI Bill education benefits, only a child or a spouse can receive and use these benefits. Even when the dependent is a spouse or a child, there are specific criteria that must be met before the transfer can take place. In addition, a post-9/11 law has changed how the transfer of these benefits occurs.

Primary Criteria

First, the military service member themselves must qualify for GI Bill benefits before these educational benefits can be transferred to qualifying dependents. Second, for the benefits to be transferable, the person must be a dependent of:

- A veteran that died or is permanently disabled from a cause directly related to active duty service
- A service member that is missing in action (MIA)
- A service member that is detained or interned in the line of duty (POW)
- A hospitalized service member or one receiving outpatient treatment for a disability related to active duty

Post-9/11 Law

A supplement was signed into law by President Bush after the attacks on 9/11. Since the war broke out in the Middle East after 9/11, the supplement made it possible for dependents of active duty service members killed in action to receive GI Bill benefits.

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Other Qualification Criteria

After the dependent meets the primary qualifications, there are also secondary conditions that must be met for them to use the GI Bill benefits. First, the dependent must be between the ages of 18 and 26, if it is a child of a service member.

A **military spouse**, however, has up to a period of 10 years from the date of eligibility or from the death of the veteran to use the benefits. If the veteran is permanently and totally disabled, eligibility for the spouse begins three years after the discharge from the military. The spouse then has up to 20 years from this point to use the GI Bill benefits. Spouses of military personnel killed on active duty also have 20 years from the date of death of the service member to receive and use the GI Bill education benefits.

Can my dependent use my GI Bill benefit? If you can answer yes to at least one of the primary criteria, then yes. The dependent also has to meet the rest of the criteria to receive approval for using the benefits.

How to Apply

The United States Department of Veteran Affairs is the main point of contact for anything related to the veteran benefits or GI Bill benefits. If you have any questions on qualifying or want an application to apply for the benefits, contact the Department of Veteran Affairs. The application you need to complete is VA Form 22-5490, Application for Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance. Complete it and send it to the VA regional office for the state where the school or educational institution is located.

Resources

http://gibill.va.gov/benefits/other_programs/dea.html

http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap04.asp

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