

Record Numbers Sign Up for GI Bill Transfer Option

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden, American Forces Press Service

When the Post-9/11 GI Bill's option to transfer unused educational benefits to eligible family members took effect August 1, more than 25,000 service members already had pre-applied to take advantage of the benefit.

The wave of applicants has far exceeded the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments' expectations, said Bob Clark, the Pentagon's assistant director for accessions policy. What's even more impressive is that the Defense Department's Web site for requesting the benefit has been live only since June 29, 2009.

"We've seen roughly a thousand applications a day for the past week or so, and we expect that to continue," Clark said July 31. "Transferability of these educational benefits has been one of the most requested provisions by family support groups, family advocacy groups and the troops out in the field and fleet."

The site, www.dmdc.osd.mil/TEB, is accessible using a common access card, Defense Department

self-service user identification or a Defense Finance and Accounting Service personal identification number. Spouses and family members must be enrolled under their service member sponsor in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System, also known as DEERS, to be eligible for the transfer benefit. Military members also can link to the site through www.defenselink.mil/gibill.

"Education is the currency that can purchase success in the 21st century...and this is the opportunity that our troops have earned."

—President Barack Obama, speaking on the Post-9/11 GI Bill at a recent ceremony at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.



Robert Bailey, a veteran's benefits coordinator for the Biloxi Veterans Hospital, briefs active duty Sailors and retirees on the new Post 9/11 GI Bill at Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, Miss. Service members may be eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill if they served at least 90 consecutive days on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001. Veterans who were honorably discharged and meet the same service criteria also may be eligible. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Terry Spain

Service members have the option to use or transfer as much of their benefits as they want to, and they can revoke or redesignate who receives the benefit at any time, Clark said. He added that service members can add names only while on active duty, and not after separating or retiring from active-duty service. The unused benefits can be transferred to a spouse, two children or any combination, he said. But children cannot start using the benefit until they're 18 or have a high school diploma or equivalent. Clark noted that children enrolled in DEERS lose their

military benefits at age 21 unless they are full-time students.

Of the 25,000 who've already applied, more than 15,000 have been approved, and of those, 5,500 dependents already have requested certificates to start their own education. "It has been a very fast, long run-up to the first of August... I see this as a wonderful opportunity for our veterans, our service members, in particular, the families of our career members to give them the opportunity to further their education and reach their dreams," Clark said. ●