



Photo by Rob McIlvaine, FMWRG, Public Affairs

*1st Sgt. Steven Colbert takes a moment out of his day to read with his son, Jordan, at Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) at Fort Myers, Virginia. Jordan is among the first Post 9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries. He wants to join the Army but first wants to graduate from Virginia Tech.*

# New GI Bill Transferability Options let families gain education benefits

By Rob McIlvaine

FMWRG Public Affairs

The Post 9/11 GI Bill is now effective, so service members can submit a request to transfer benefits to their spouses and children if they so choose.

"Transferability of Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits has been the most requested initiative we receive from our service members," Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy Bill Carr said. "We believe it will assist us in retaining highly qualified military personnel."

Career service members on active duty or in the selected reserve on Aug. 1 who are eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill may be entitled to transfer all or a portion of their unused Post 9/11 GI Bill entitlement to one or more family members.

Among the first to take advantage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill was 1st Sgt. Steven Colbert, Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) at Fort Myers, Va. The Old Guard conducts ceremonies in the DC area, funerals in Arlington National Cemetery, maintains the traditions of the US Army, showcases the Army to our nation's citizens and the world, and defends the dignity and honor of the nation's fallen comrades at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"I will be the first to say that the Army is probably the best thing that has ever happened to me," Colbert said. "It has given me some of the advantages that I didn't have as a child growing up. One of the reasons why I stayed in so long is

because of Jordan, my son. Now I have the opportunity to give him something I never had."

Colbert has spent 23 years in the Army with tours throughout Europe and across the U.S.

During his years in the Army, Colbert took advantage of tuition assistance and graduated with a B.S. degree in Management.

His wife, Danielle, currently a junior at Prince George's Community College, is working towards her B.A. in Business Administration. Jordan already has big plans.

"I want to go in the Army and play football," said Jordan, age 9. "But I want to attend Virginia Tech first."

"I didn't put that in his head," Colbert said. "He already has picked that out, and with us being here in the DC area, the Post 9/11 GI Bill is perfect. It's a pricey school but these benefits are going to help me be able to take care of that. I'm just overwhelmed about the opportunity to really be able to take care of him."

For Soldiers and Army spouses who might want to continue with their studies, the Post 9/11 GI Bill can be used for all levels of degree programs, including a second degree, a master's degree or even a doctorate.

Defense officials are advising service members to transfer at least a month's worth of GI Bill benefit to every dependent before they leave service. This will lock in an opportunity to

change the number of months transferred at a later time.

Any family member not approved for transferability before a member retires or separates will be denied the opportunity, unless the member re-enters service.

Likewise, veterans who remarry or have more children after leaving service will not be able to transfer GI Bill benefits to these new family members.

"It's recommended that Soldiers add all family members as potential beneficiaries of their Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Once a Soldier has retired or separated from the Army, they can no longer add new family members as potential beneficiaries," said Bob Clark, the DoD's assistant director for accession policy and military personnel policy.

Colbert also wants to make sure his Soldiers know about this benefit.

"Because I'm the 1st Sgt. here at Headquarters Company, with all these assets like the Regimental Career counselors, I'm in a unique position to pass this knowledge on to my Soldiers," Colbert said.

A program he's particularly proud of is College 101, which the Fort Myer military community developed with the Army Education Center. Representatives from local colleges and universities will hold an educational fair

"We will have people come in from the education center who will advise Soldiers to take advantage of these benefits,



Photo by Airman 1st Class Jonathan Snyder

*Tech. Sgt. Lisa Harris explains to Senior Airman Eric Owens all the College Level Examination Program tests that are available. The 407th Expeditionary Services Education Center gives service members the opportunity to further their education and career development. Airman Owens is assigned to the 407th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron and is deployed from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. Sergeant Harris is assigned to the 407th Expeditionary Services Squadron and is deployed from Andrews AFB, Md.*

*Soldiers who have served less than the time required to earn 100 percent of the benefit under the Post 9/11 GI Bill may receive benefits at a pro-rated amount. The amount of active service members have after 9/11 determines what percentage of benefits they can receive under the Post 9-11 GI Bill.*

<b>Member Serves</b>	<b>Percentage of Maximum Benefit Payable</b>
At least 36 months	100%
At least 30 continuous days on active duty and must be discharged due to service-connected disability	100%
At least 30 months, but less than 36 months	90%
At least 24 months, but less than 30 months	80%
At least 18 months, but less than 24 months	70%
At least 12 months, but less than 18 months	60%
At least 06 months, but less than 12 months	50%
At least 90 days, but less than 06 months	40%



because they have to have some type of educational background to be successful. A lot of us in the Army don't realize it but, hey, it's tough outside that gate, really tough. You've got to have a balance. You've got to be more competitive than the next person," Colbert said.

Tuition is not the only benefit extended to potential college students. For students attending school more than half the time, the Post 9/11 GI Bill also pays housing costs, up to a rate equiva-


lent to the Basic Allowance for Housing rate for an E-5 with dependents in the ZIP code where the school is located.

Students are also entitled to a yearly stipend of up to \$1,000 to cover the cost of books and supplies, and students from highly rural areas who are transferring to a school may also be entitled to a one-time payment of \$500.

"I get choked up just thinking about the benefits I'm able to give my son," Colbert said.

Soldiers can elect to transfer benefits to family members through the Transferability of Educational Benefits Web site at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/TEB>.

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers the "Post 9/11 GI Bill," and determines eligibility for education benefits.

Further information on eligibility, benefit levels, and application procedures can be found at the <http://www.gibill.va.gov/> VA Web site. 

The Department of Veterans Affairs has begun accepting applications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Once you submit your application, the VA will process your request and send you a letter detailing your eligibility and entitlements under the program.

The form requires that individuals currently eligible for another education benefit make an irrevocable election from their existing program to the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Typically individuals who are eligible for more than one benefit may use a combined total of 48 months of entitlement.

Therefore, for those individuals eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) program, be advised that if you have entitlement remaining under the MGIB, the number of months of Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement you will be eligible for will be equal to the number of months remaining under MGIB. However, if you exhaust all of your MGIB entitlement, then you may be entitled to a maximum of 12 additional months of entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Visit [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) for the latest information and forms for the new GI Bill.

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