



COVID-19 VA Education Benefits FAQs

Senate Bill 3503 was signed into law on March 21, 2020. S. 3503 gives the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to continue GI Bill payments uninterrupted in the event of national emergencies. The new law allows for VA to continue to pay benefits regardless of the fact that the program has changed from resident training to online training. This law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020.

- 1. Will Monthly Housing Payments or Stipends be impacted when courses are changed to distance learning during the term due to COVID-19?**
 - a. Based on the new law, Post 9/11 GI Bill students who pursue resident courses converted to an online modality solely due to COVID-19 will continue to receive the Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) rate for resident training. The law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020.
 - b. Students who receive the Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30 and Chapter 1606) and the Dependent Educational Assistance (Chapter 35) Benefit will continue to receive the monthly stipend based off current enrollment.

- 2. Will students using VA Education Benefits be allowed to continue or start remedial level courses (ie. MTT, MTE, MCR, ENF) that are converted to distance learning due to COVID-19?**
 - a. Yes. The new law allows schools to continue to certify remedial credit hours to the VA as resident credit hours during the timeframe authorized by S. 3503: March 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020.

- 3. What happens if a student becomes ill due to COVID-19 and cannot continue training while the school continues to offer courses?**
 - a. Students who become ill should consult with their professors to determine if they qualify for an incomplete and, if they qualify, what actions they need to take to request an incomplete.
 - b. Students who choose to withdraw from courses due to illness should email Thomas Nelson Veteran Services at va@tncc.edu to have the VA Hold removed and include the

reason for withdrawal. School Certifying Officials are required to report the withdrawal to the VA with the student's last date of attendance. A withdrawal due to illness will be reported to the VA as a mitigating circumstance. Note: The law does NOT allow VA to continue payments beyond the last day of attendance.

4. What happens if a student chooses to withdraw due to the conversion to distance learning caused by COVID-19?

- a. School Certifying Officials are required to report the withdrawal to the VA with the student's last date of attendance. It is not known at this time if this can be reported as a mitigating circumstance. Thomas Nelson Veteran Services has submitted an inquiry to the VA and is awaiting a response. Note: The law does NOT allow VA to continue payments beyond the last day of attendance.

5. Will students enrolled in Workforce Development programs or courses which are converted to distance learning during the COVID-19 national emergency continue to receive benefits?

- a. Yes. Students using Post 9/11 benefits who pursue Workforce Development programs or courses that are converted to distance learning due to COVID-19 will continue to receive the Monthly Housing Allowance rate for residential training. Those using Montgomery GI Bill or Dependent Educational Assistance Benefits will continue to receive their monthly stipends based on current enrollment. The law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020.

6. Can students enroll in classes for the upcoming Summer and Fall Semesters?

- a. Yes, students may enroll for the upcoming Summer and Fall Semesters; however, the VA has asked all schools to temporarily refrain from making any future enrollment certifications to avoid confusion. Thomas Nelson Veteran Services will notify students once we can begin submitting certifications for the upcoming semesters.

7. Who should students contact if they have questions about their specific VA Education Benefit?

- a. Thomas Nelson students may contact Veteran Services at 757-825-3442 or va@tncc.edu if they have any questions related to their benefits.
- b. Students may also contact the VA at 1-888-442-4551 with questions related to their benefits or submit a question through the GI BILL Ask a Question Portal located at <https://gibill.custhelp.va.gov/>.