

VA WORK-STUDY GUIDE

FOR STUDENT VETERANS



Student Veterans of America

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Mission: This guide was designed to help you obtain Veterans Benefits Administration Work-Study benefits. Contact the VA Education Office if you are unsure which educational benefits you are eligible for. Consider all of your educational benefits and the resources you have while still serving in the military. Some states offer educational benefits for veterans; inquire within your state.

Don't rely on this document to determine if you're eligible for Work-Study or education benefits. To receive a formal decision from VA, you must file a claim for benefits

Veterans Work-Study Program Checklist

Preparing to apply:

- Determine your specific “educational or training objective” that you will attain via your studies. This should be no longer than 2-3 sentences.
 - You may need this statement for the VA to determine your *motivation*.
- Determine your eligibility to receive VA educational benefits
- Update your resume; you will need this to complete line 12 of [VA Form 22-8691](#)
- Determine your work site preference. Be specific because many facilities have the same name or perform the same services in different locations or cities. Work sites include the, but are not limited, to the following:
 - School Veterans Offices/Coordinators
 - VA Medical Facility/Clinics
 - VA Regional Offices
 - State Veteran’ s Agencies
 - Veteran Service Organizations
 - Government facility where you would prefer to do VA-related work.
- Contact your VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Counseling (VR&C) Officer, if applicable
- Determine the time period you would like to be employed for
 - You may extend your work-study on a continual basis
- Contact your VA Certifying Official (at your school) and ensure your VA educational benefits certification has been submitted.
 - You must be enrolled at least $\frac{3}{4}$ time
 - You may begin to work up to 30 days before start of classes and work in-between semesters/quarters.
- [Complete Application for Work-Study \(VA Form 22-8691\)](#)
 - Any VA regional office, VA office or Vet Center, Local representatives of veterans organizations, or Reserve Education and Incentives Officers can assist you

- Remember to attach a resume and write “See attached page” in line 12
- Submit a specific worksite position description, if applicable.
- If you are denied entry into the Work-Study program, contact a Veterans’ Service Organization and ask for assistance with the appeals process.

Note: A work-study position usually requires the student veteran be approved for VA educational benefits.

- If you are an online-only student:
 - 1. Determine if your school has any Work-Study positions by contacting your VA Certifying Official
 - 2. If there are already Work-Study positions available, and you live near a VA Hospital, VA Office, National Cemetery, DoD facility (if eligible), state veterans’ home, or authorized state agency, list that as your preferred work site on line 11 of [VA Form 22-8691](#)
 - 3. Attach a letter explaining that you are physically separated from your campus, and that you desire to perform VA-related work in your area.
 - 4. If there are no current Work-Study positions available at your school (the situation at many online colleges and universities) contact your VA Certifying Official for more information.

Upon Acceptance:

- Keep track of the hours you work and complete your time card.
 - Submit your hours to your appropriate regional education office
 - Method of payment is identical to your VA educational benefit payment method (i.e. direct deposit, check)
- Request an extension of your agreement as needed
 - Request Extension on the final timesheet
 - Must be enrolled in at least $\frac{3}{4}$ class time and eligible for VA educational benefits to continue to receive work-study benefits

Important Things to Know

- The VA has wide latitude to accept you into Work-Study, as with most other programs.
- It is in your best interest to be professional in your looks, actions, and demeanor when you contact the VA for any reason.
- Listen to your benefits advisors and take their advice. The benefits advisors exist to help you gain access to all of your benefits – and they have a lot of authority to decide.
- VA employees are bound by regulations to avoid any bias, including experience and disabilities, but they are human. Treat them professionally, remember to thank them, and things will often go your way.
- You can apply for a VA Work-Study position at any time you are receiving educational benefits from the VA.
- You should only submit one application for the program during any single enrollment period/semester.
- Once you receive your notice that you have been accepted into the program, keep it in a safe place. You will also receive an eight-digit control number – keep that handy.
- The number of applicants selected will depend on the availability of VA-related work at your school or at VA facilities in your area.
- Wages are paid at the [Federal minimum wage or the State minimum wage](#) (if the state has a minimum wage), whichever is greater
- Important web sites:
 - [Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents](#)
 - [Official VA GI Bill Website – Education Benefits](#)
 - [Minimum wage guidelines](#)
- VA Work-Study Program Regional Offices
 - St. Louis: (314) 552-9861
 - Buffalo (716) 857-3147
 - Atlanta: (404) 929-3117
 - Muskogee, OK: (918) 781-7878

What is Work-Study?

The Federal Veterans' Affairs (VA) Work Study Allowance Program is a program that allows you to earn additional pay for working on behalf of the VA while you are at least a $\frac{3}{4}$ time student. You will be limited to working only with veterans' programs while participating in this program. The program is fully funded by the VA, with the exception of the costs for space, equipment, training, and supervision during your assignment. This cost is paid by the school, DoD facility, or VA facility where you work.

VA work-study students are not used to replace existing staff and are used only to augment regular staff in providing quality service to veterans.

VA Work-Study Eligibility Requirements

The VA will need to determine your eligibility for the program. You need to be prepared to prove you are eligible. In general, you must be enrolled in appropriate education or training at the $\frac{3}{4}$ time rate or higher, which the VA may ask you to document. In addition, you must be entitled to *and* receiving VA assistance under one of the following provisions of title 38, U.S.C:

- [Chapter 30](#) (Montgomery GI Bill).
- [Chapter 31](#) (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program for veterans with service-connected disabilities).
- [Chapter 32](#) (Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)) for those persons who entered the Armed Forces during the period after December 31, 1976, and before July 1, 1985.
- [Chapter 33](#). (Post-9/11/2001 Veterans) This is a new Chapter covering post- 9/11/2001 veterans. There is no available information at this time. It will likely be similar to Chapter 32.
- [Chapter 35](#) (Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)
- [Chapter 1606 and 1607 of title 10](#), U.S.C (Educational Assistance for Members of the Selected Reserve)

Remember that the VA has wide latitude to accept you into Work-Study. Treat all employees of the VA professionally, remember to thank them, and things will often go your way.

The VA will also look at several other factors, including:

- **Service-Connected Disabilities.** Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated at 30 percent or more will be afforded a priority.

- **Financial Need.** Including, but not be limited to, the following: number of dependents; living expenses, including dependents' living expenses; unusually high tuition and fees; and/or unusual family medical expenses.
- **Chapter 35 status.** These students must be pursuing a program of education in a state. A "state" means each of the several states, territories, and possessions of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Canal Zone (38 U.S.C. 101(20))
- **Availability of Transportation.** Can veteran obtain reliable and affordable transportation to a particular worksite and within a normal commuting distance?
- **Motivation of Veteran** to complete program and attain a particular educational goal.

How do I apply for Work Study?

The application process is fairly straightforward: you need to fill out [VA Form 22-8691](#). Before you do this, you will want to do some background work.

First, update your resume. On line 12 of [VA Form 22-8691](#), you can write “See attached page.” Remember to note on the resume that it is a continuation of line 12.

Next, you will want to create a statement describing a specific “educational or training objective” that you can attain through your studies. This might be, “I want to apply the skills I learned as a cook to obtaining a degree in culinary arts so that I can become a chef,” or “I want to apply the background I gained as an intelligence analyst to obtaining a degree in criminal justice and becoming a police officer.” This statement may be needed by the VA Work-Study Coordinator to ensure that you have the proper motivation to succeed.

You will also need to select the certified enrollment period that you will sign the Work-Study contract for. In general, this will be one semester or quarter, but may be up to an entire academic year. There are benefits and drawbacks to each certified enrollment period. For example, a shorter (one semester) enrollment period is easier to prove to the VA, but the Work-Study assignment may be less stable. A longer enrollment period is more difficult to prove, but you will know that you have the position for the whole period.

You will also want to contact a Veterans’ Service Organization, like the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion or the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Their benefits officers can assist you with the paperwork.

Finally, you will want to contact your VA Certifying Official or student veteran group at your campus. These individuals may already know of Work-Study positions on the campus, or may be able to assist you in creating one.

What happens if I am rejected for Work-Study?

If you are rejected for the program, you have the right to appeal the decision. You will receive a form letter in the mail, along with [VA Form 4107](#). This form outlines your rights to appeal. At this point, it might be best to seek assistance from a Veterans Service Organization and talk to your benefits coordinator.

What happens if I am an online-only student?

It is possible, though difficult, to obtain a Work-Study assignment if you are an online student. First, determine if your school has any Work-Study positions by contacting your VA Certifying Official (all schools have one) or your Veterans Office. If there are already Work-Study positions available, and you live near a VA Hospital, VA Office, National Cemetery, DoD facility (if eligible), state veterans' home, or authorized state agency, list that as your preferred work site on line 11 of [VA Form 22-8691](#). It is also good to attach a letter explaining that you are physically separated from your campus, and that you desire to perform VA-related work in your area.

If there are no current Work-Study positions available at your school (the situation at many online colleges and universities) it is far more difficult to create a Work-Study position. SVA is working with the VA to create paperwork to allow you to perform VA-related work, but the work is not yet completed.

How much can I work and earn in a semester?

You will earn the [Federal minimum wage or the State minimum wage](#) (if the state has a minimum wage), whichever is greater.

The total hours you can work in a period (usually a semester) cannot be more than 25 times the number of weeks in your enrollment period. For example:

- If your enrollment period (e.g., semester) is 15 weeks, you cannot work more than 375 (25 x 15) hours in that period.
- If you elect to receive an advance payment, VA will make your first payment in advance of your work, for the lesser of
 - (1) 40 percent of the total number of your Work-Study hours or

- (2) 50 hours of work.
- If you elect to not receive an advance payment, VA will pay you for those hours after you work them.
- The final payment is for the lesser of
 - (1) 50 hours or
 - (2) the hours remaining on your contract.

How will I get paid?

You need to keep track of the time you work.

In general, you can expect to be paid every 50 hours of work you complete – this is the reason the VA allows you to take an advance in pay.

Every week, your campus Work-Study supervisor will complete a time card (VA Form 22-8690). Once you reach 50 hours of work, your supervisor will ask you to sign the form before s/he mails it or send it via fax to the VA.

Your final time card may be for less than 50 hours if less than 50 hours remain to complete the contract, or if you stop performing the services before the completion of the contract.

You may be eligible to be paid separately for your Work-Study by your school. This pay is in addition to the VA Work-Study pay, and will not affect your ability to work in this program. If the school chooses to pay you separately, the rate reflect the difference between the amount payable by VA and the amount which the school otherwise pays to non-VA Work-Study students performing similar services.

The VA pays you every 50 hours of work to make it easier to run the Work-Study program. If you work more than 50 hours on one time-card, VA Work-Study coordinator may authorize payment for the total number of hours worked rather than limit reimbursement to 50 hours.

Can I get an advance on my Work-Study pay?

You may receive an advance on your Work-Study pay. If you are selected for the Work-Study program, you can be paid in advance an amount equal to 40 percent of the total amount of the Work-Study allowance, but not more than an amount equal to 50 times the applicable minimum wage to be paid under the agreement.

For example, if you have a Work-Study assignment that is for 350 hours in a semester, and your hourly minimum wage is \$8.00 per hour, you may receive an advance of \$400 (50 x 8.00). This is less than the 40% of the total amount of the allowance (\$1,120, or 40% x \$8.00 x 350 hours).

You are allowed to receive only one advance payment per certified enrollment period (term, quarter, semester, or school year).

Be careful if you take an advance payment, because if you fail a class, receive an incomplete, drop a class, or become unable to complete your Work-Study assignment you may be forced to pay the VA back. Then VA will treat the money owed to them as “a debt subject to recovery.” The amount of the debt you may have to repay will be an amount equal to the number of hours of unperformed services multiplied by the hourly rate of the payment. According to the VA, the collection of these overpayments will be actively pursued.”

What happens if I drop or fail a class and am no longer attending school ¾ time?

This can be a difficult situation, and you should work closely with your supervisor and the VA Work-Study coordinator in your region.

The VA is entitled to cancel your contract and stop paying you, and can also take actions to make you pay back any advances that you have received. They can also disapprove of future applications for Work-Study if you establish a pattern of low motivation.

The Work-Study coordinator, though, has broad authority to let you keep working. Treating him/her professionally, being a motivated student, and establishing a record of good service will all make the decision to let you keep working easier.

Some things you should know:

- If you received an advance payment, and you reduce your training/education time to less than ¾ time, ***and you continue*** to your training/education at the reduced rate, the Work-Study coordinator will normally allow you to complete the number of hours for which an advance payment was issued. You may be denied any additional time.
- If you received an advance payment, and you reduce your training/education time to less than ¾ time, ***and you do not continue*** to your training/education at the reduced rate, the Work-Study coordinator will normally not allow you to complete the number of hours for which an advance payment was issued. You will also likely be denied any additional time.
- If you received an advance payment, and you drop out of your training/education program, the VA may or may not allow you to keep working until you have earned the entire advance.

- You will want to fully explain, in writing, to your supervisor and the VA Work-Study Program Coordinator why you dropped out of your training.
- You may apply again for the Work-Study program by completing another [Application for Work-Study \(VA Form 22-8691\)](#) in a future period.
- If you did not receive an advance payment, and you drop out of your training/education program, the VA will not allow you to keep working.
 - You may apply again for the Work-Study program by completing another [Application for Work-Study \(VA Form 22-8691\)](#) in a subsequent period.

What kinds of things will I be doing if I am accepted into the Work-Study program?

- You may do the following types of VA-related work:
 - VA paperwork at schools
 - VA paperwork at VA Regional Offices
 - Outreach services under VA supervision or supervision furnished by a State approving agency employee
 - Work at VA medical facilities or National Cemetery System Offices
 - Work at Department of Defense facilities related to education benefits under the GI Bill-Selected Reserve.
 - Only claimants receiving Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (chapter 1606) benefits can do this type of work.
 - Work assisting the care of veterans in a State home receiving VA per diem assistance
 - Work at VA medical facilities
 - Work assisting the administration of a National Cemetery system or a State veterans' cemetery

VA Work-Study Forms

- VA Form 22-8690, Time Record (Work-Study Program) *[Not available online; not generally needed by students]*.
- [VA Form 22-8691, Application for Work-Study Allowance](#).
- [VA Form 22-8691d, Application for Work-Study Allowance to Repay an Education Debt \(Under 38 U.S.C. 3485\)](#).
- [VA Form 22-8692, Student Work-Study Agreement \(Student Services\)](#).
 - For an advance payment.
- [VA Form 22-8692a, Extended Student Work-Study Agreement](#).
- [VA Form 22-8692b, Work-Study Agreement \(Student Services\)](#).
- VA Form 22-8692d, Work-Study Agreement (Repayment of Education Debt) *[Not available online]*.
- VA Form 22-8693, Work-Study Control Register (Student Services) *[Not available online]*.

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